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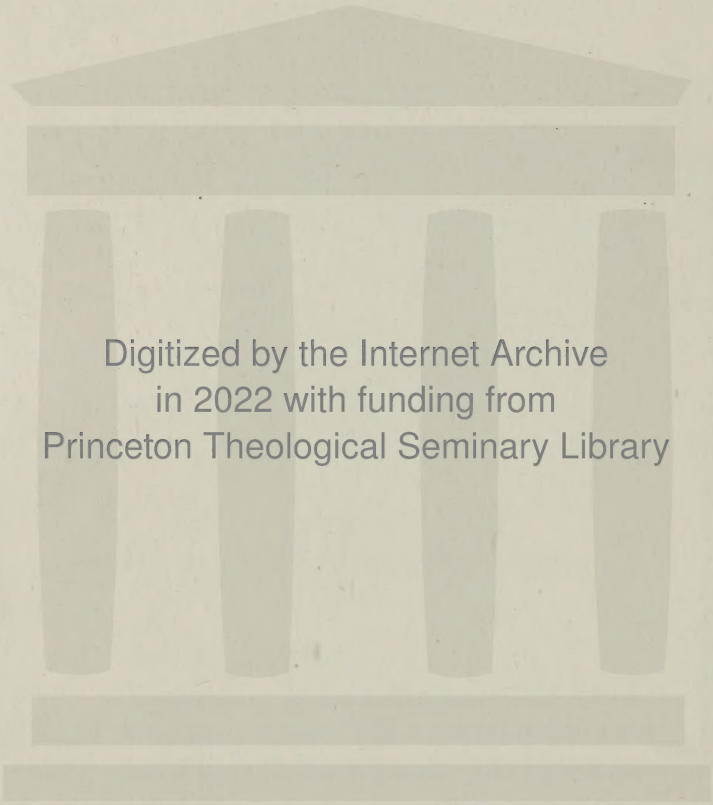
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CHRISTIAN THEISM:

THE TESTIMONY OF REASON AND REVELATION
TO THE EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER OF
THE SUPREME BEING.

VOL. II.

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CHRISTIAN THEISM:

THE TESTIMONY OF REASON AND REVELATION
TO THE EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER OF
THE SUPREME BEING.

BY

ROBERT ANCHOR THOMPSON, M.A.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE SUPREME BEING.

Τὸ ἀγαθὸν τῶν μὲν εὖ ἐχόντων αἴτιον τῶν δὲ κακῶν ἀναίτιον.

LONDON:
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1855.

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BOOK III.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER IN NATURE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

It was the purpose of the former Part to examine the principles of Natural Theology, and to show that man is able to look through nature up to nature's God. The means of knowledge we have found to be as safe, and the knowledge as valid, as any that he can have beyond the sphere of his mental consciousness. It remains to consider the evidences, in nature and revelation, of the Character of that Great Being, Who is before all things and above all. He is thus far known as the Self-existent Being, and the First Cause of creation. Things visible cannot have come into existence of themselves, cannot continue in their own power. Whether they be always dependent on the Divine Energy, or in any way independent

BOOK III. CHAP. I.

of it, the very conditions under which they are known as finite, compel the mind to regard them as derived, if not always dependent on the Infinite. The difference between a past finished creation, and a continued creative operation, may perhaps have no meaning in its application to the Supreme Being. It is a difference depending on relations of time. He is superior to these relations. But however incomprehensible His Nature or His Agency, it is certain that He is the Source of all being. Finite beings have begun to be, because He exists and willed it; they continue, because He cannot cease to be, and wills that they shall continue. Whatever may be the advancement of knowledge, the common notions, that all things were made by Him and are preserved by Him, that they are finite and changeable, He Infinite and Unchangeable, express sufficiently all that it is possible or necessary for man to know. "By Him all things consist." He is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Evidences of the Divine Character are to be found in the wise and benevolent designs of creation, and in the moral constitution of man. The Creator is known by His Works, as the conduct of a man discovers the qualities of his mind. This part of the subject depends chiefly on the physico-theological, or design argument. The manifestations of wise, holy, and benevolent design, in man

and nature, will lead us, by strict inductive inference, to recognise the Infinite Wisdom, Holiness, and Love, as well as the Infinite Power of the Supreme Being.

CHAPTER II.

THE WISDOM, UNITY, AND INFINITY OF THE AUTHOR OF NATURE.

Priority of mind to matter.

1. THEISM affirms, in opposition to atheism, that mind is prior in existence to matter, and establishes the truth by means of the argument from design. The world of human knowledge may be said to consist of two worlds in mutual relation, but in their nature wholly distinct;—the world of mind manifested in thought, feeling, will; that of matter manifested in the physical properties of extended substances. Of these we have seen that matter exists in such a way, as to be capable of receiving and transmitting impressed forces, and of recording in itself, and exhibiting to distant ages, many events of its previous history. Mind, on the contrary, is known in each individual man, to have existed but a few years. The known world of matter is undoubtedly prior to any human intelligence. But is there no Intelligence prior in

order of being to that of the human race? prior even to matter, so far as this can fall under human cognition? The material world itself furnishes an answer to the question which should be decisive; an answer which cannot more reasonably be disputed than the fact that it exists at all.

Let this ancient being then,—this material substance,—be summoned by the late-born reason, to give account of itself and its origin. Let it be examined upon its present and its past conditions; and required to deliver up the records on stony tables, written more indelibly than "with an iron pen and with lead in the rock"; that answer may be made, whether in the present or in the past; in all the glories of nature and the wonders of science; in the mystery of its minuteness or of its immensity; in the least speck of creation which can be rendered visible by the microscope, or in the grandest objects of the telescope; it offer a single pretension to be the first existing being; or whether it do not every where bear testimony to an Intelligence prior to itself.

Run then through the immensities of space and time, from the least discernible speck, to the immeasurable magnitudes of stellar systems; from the world as it is before you, through all its ages backward, till the massive curtain of granite is drawn across the unknown past; or still farther, if you can, to a diffused mist of nature, or a system

of disjointed atoms. Every where, and in every time, it will be seen that material substance declines the honour which atheism would force upon it; and confesses its subordination to a Supreme Intelligence Who is One and Infinite. The same reason must be the judge of the manifestations of power, whether in nature or in any work of man; and must determine, on the same principles in either case, whether or no it be intelligent. Let scepticism argue as it may, it will find it difficult to evade the conviction, that the Power which has wrought so admirably and so wisely in the countless ages of the past, and still upholds its grand productions in the present, will continue to act with the same Wisdom in the future, and to include even the atheist himself within the sphere of His great designs.

Partial knowledge of God's ways.

2. Ridicule has attempted to weaken the force of the design argument, by inquiring whether we are to suppose every thing was made for man; whether, for instance, Jupiter was created with its four moons, to give us the means, once so much sought, of determining the longitude. But it is not necessary to know the purpose of a human agent in all his actions, before we can conclude him to be intelligent in any. Nor is it necessary to search all the plans and purposes of Providence, before we can appreciate the wonderful wisdom manifested in the great laws of nature, or in the

lesser adaptations of physiology, such, for example, as are exhibited in the human eye. Without question, the argument may be misapplied. It must be so when it pretends to foretel the agency of the Creator, to dogmatise upon its outgoings in distant spheres, to search the "ways past finding out." It is possible and very common to misunderstand the purpose of a human agent; yet his purpose may nevertheless be in other instances unquestionable.

Creation by law.

3. What then is the evidence of the material world respecting itself? The design argument has been successfully applied in every department of science. The evidences of intelligence superior to inert matter, are, for their number and variety, beyond all power of description. But to see their full force, it is necessary to consider them, not merely as isolated instances of wisdom, but all in their combination and concurrence as parts of one majestic plan. Whatever account may be given of the origin of organized and living beings,—and it will not be easy to discredit the conclusion of the best geologists [1], that each distinct species, no less than the beginning of matter itself, requires the admission of a new creative agency,—but however this be, there can be little doubt that the material

[1] See Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise, chap. vi.

world, independently of its organized systems, has arrived at its present condition, probably from one much simpler, through a course of natural developments according to law. It has been sufficiently shown that, by the principles of knowledge, one of two things is necessary. Whatever the earth's primitive condition, it must either have contained in itself the causes of all future changes,—and then we need a Supreme Intelligence, to account for the original properties of matter, and all their relations to one another; or these causes must have lain in the continued agency of a Superior Being. A theory of creation by law can no more dispense with a creative intelligence, than a theory which affirms the world to have been instantaneously created by an Almighty Fiat.

Astronomical arrangements.

4. Whatever hypothesis may be adopted respecting the commencement of the universe, its Astronomical order must be referred to One intelligent Cause. The solar system bears numerous testimonies to the Unity and Wisdom of the Creator; the stellar universe, all but infinite, to His Immensity. To instance some of the arrangements of the solar system. It consists of two kinds of material bodies, one of them dependent on the other for its light and heat. It is happily ordered that the great body, which is the centre

of stability to the system, is also the source of light and heat to all the planets.

The motions of the bodies also afford remarkable instances of order; which would need to be ascribed to an Intelligent Disposer, though the world itself were stript of its garment of designs. In considering the movements of the universe, we may suppose the sun and planets to consist of but one chymical substance; they may be solid globes of gold, for instance, revolving in space; and their order and stability afford striking evidences of Wise Purpose. The masses are kept in their abiding order by the universal force of attraction. Every body attracts every other, with a force which increases in proportion to the mass of the attracting body, and diminishes in a duplicate ratio as the distance increases. The attracting force of the central body would be doubled, if its matter were doubled: and, while it remains the same, its force diminishes with the distance of the body attracted, in the same proportion as the intensity of the light is diminished the farther you recede from the luminous body.

It was the great achievement of Sir Isaac Newton, to account for all the motions of the solar system, and even the fall of bodies at the earth's surface, by means of this simple law of attraction. But he showed that many different orbits are possible under the same law, and that one will be

determined rather than another, by the *initial* circumstances of motion.

If we consider only two bodies, they will revolve about their common centre of gravity, each attracting the other: and if they be not very unequal in magnitude, the result will be what is seen in systems of double stars, which both revolve about some point between them in space. But in the case of the solar system, we have one self-luminous body, far exceeding the magnitude of all the others combined. The diameter of the sun is ten times as great as Jupiter's, and Jupiter's more than ten times that of the earth. Hence, if their densities were the same, the mass of the sun would be a thousand times that of Jupiter, and more than a million—in fact, it is thirteen hundred thousand times—that of the earth. To form a conception of its magnitude, we may suppose its centre to be placed in the position of the earth's centre; and its circumference will then lie at a distance on all sides, nearly *twice* as great as the distance of the moon from the earth[2]. Its diameter is nearly *four* times as long as the diameter of the moon's orbit. Its magnitude is six hundred times as great as that of all the planets combined. The result is that the sun moves within such narrow limits, that we may consider the planets as all moving about a fixed central body.

[2] This illustration is, I believe, Sir John Herschel's.

But they may move under very different circumstances. Under the same central force, they may describe circles, or ellipses, and these may be of greater or less eccentricity, or may run into parabolas or hyperbolas. The initial circumstances of motion must have determined whether they shall move perpetually at nearly constant distances from the sun; or, like some of the comets, shall describe curves approaching at one point close to the sun, and then sweeping off to immense distances in the depths of space; or whether they shall be drawn no more than once towards the central body, and shall then be carried off in parabolic or hyperbolic orbits, never to return. In the latter cases, there would have been an end of the system at once.

If they had been so projected at first, as to begin describing elongated ovals, their movements might have continued for many ages: but orbits of this kind would evidently have been incompatible with all known conditions of animal or vegetable life. To be adapted to these conditions, their distances must vary within narrow limits. Their orbits must be not far from circular, and such they are found to be in nature. None but the ignorant can imagine the system to have been established as it is by chance. There may have been a prior cause in the cosmogony, which determined that each of the planets should begin to move in an

orbit nearly circular, in preference to any of the infinite number of elliptical or other orbits, which were possible. But whatever may be the extension of science, whatever knowledge may be gained of the cosmogony, it may be seen beforehand that the arrangement can never be accounted for by any properties of material substances; but must have its Cause, which will be found at last, where it was placed at first, in the agency of an Intelligent Being, Who passed by innumerable forms of disorder, and established the one form of order which was requisite.

Stability of the solar system.

5. Granted then that the orbits of the planets are not very elongated eclipses, and must continue for a long time as they are: the question still remains, —Will it be always thus? Does the system possess stability? To show that it does, was the achievement of the great mathematicians who succeeded Newton; and the demonstration has not been effected but through their combined researches, and by means of an intricate and refined analysis. Not only are the planets held in their orbits by the attraction of the sun, they also attract one another, and are constantly drawing one another from their positions. Their real motion becomes by this means exceedingly complicated. But it is easy to understand that the effect might have been a continual, though slow, alteration of the orbits;

which at length, after the lapse of ages, would have put an end to the stability of the system. The great lunar and planetary inequalities arising from these disturbances, have been determined with extreme accuracy; and some of them are found to go on increasing for many thousands of years, and then at length to attain their maximum and to decrease. Thus Jupiter and Saturn are subject to a periodic variation of their eccentricities, of which the period is upwards of seventy thousand years [3]. But it is found that this and the other inequalities are always confined within narrow limits; and consequently the system is stable. This stability, however, is the result of certain conditions in the first constitution of things. It is ensured by the fact that the planets all revolve *in the same direction* round the sun [4]. It would not have subsisted, unless the eccentricities of their orbits had been small. And it is remarkable, not only that this condition is fulfilled, but that the stability would have been compatible with larger eccentricities, in the cases of smaller than of larger planets; and that this condition also is fulfilled. The minute asteroids have the most eccentric orbits, Mercury's is more so than Jupiter's, while the comets which are mere gaseous bodies, and produce no percep-

[3] Pratt's Mechanical Philosophy, § 385.

[4] Had they moved in opposite directions, the stability would have been possible only under very special circumstances. Pratt, ibid.

tible effect upon the planetary motions, move in the most eccentric and various orbits and do no harm. Here again the primitive causes of order may be found in a system of cosmogony. And in the search for such a system, this correspondence between the orbits and the magnitudes of the bodies, is probably a fact to be taken account of.

In this view, the *position* of the asteroids may also perhaps be of importance. They occupy the middle place of the solar system, in the order of distance from the sun. And it is remarkable that the planets nearer to the sun than the asteroids, differ in several particulars from the more distant. They are much smaller, more dense, and all revolve about their axes in twenty-four hours; while the exterior and larger planets revolve in shorter periods. These two sets of planets, then, are separated from one another by a large number of small bodies, and probably many minute fragments, revolving at nearly the same distance from the sun, at which, according to Bode's law, another planet was to be expected. This fact may bear some relation to the conjectured explosion of a larger planet, or an unknown event in the cosmogony, which gave rise to the formation of several minute bodies between Mars and Jupiter, instead of one large planet. At all events, it would appear to be a fact to be kept in view, in any attempt to connect the positions, movements, and what is known

of the constitutions of the moon and planets, in a system of creation by law.

But suppose the causes of order have been found in such a system. Will it follow that they are in dead matter? Or shall we not want a Living Cause of the cosmogony itself? At least, if atheism be possible; if a man can imagine that there is no Infinite Intelligence prior to the movements of the universe; he must admit that these are as regular and well-ordered, as if there were. Infinite Intelligence could not have more skilfully directed them. If any be content to think matter his god, it will still be prudent to consider, whether it may not be expected in endless ages to come, to deal as wisely with himself.

Chymical relations. Varieties of substances.

6. In considering the stability of the universe, we have supposed the moving bodies to be of one simple substance. But the aspect of the world shows marks of intelligence far more varied and numerous. Natural theology must here call in the aid of chymical science; which furnishes evidences of Mind prior in existence to matter, not only as the Director of its movements, but as the Ordainer of all the properties by which material substance is known to the mind of man.

Suppose it were necessary, for the accommodation of living beings, that the world should consist of at least two substances. Suppose, for instance,

BOOK III. CHAP. II.

that it must contain a solid and a fluid substance. It is manifest that they must have some relation to one another. If the globe be of gold, the fluid substance must not be mercury; for the result will presently be an amalgam, and the fluid is lost. Very many such relations were to be taken account of, and many conditions to be fulfilled, in the formation of a world of fifty or sixty simples, bearing certain chymical affinities to one another, and all exposed to the high temperature of the early geological period. Accident may throw together various substances in one blast furnace; but it needs a skilful artificer, to combine them, and to mould them to a beautiful form. But any such illustration falls infinitely short of the case before us. We have seen already, that a theory of materialism leads us, whether we will or no, to a multitude of independently existing atoms or forces, each possessing its own peculiar properties. If the atheist deny the reasonable conclusion, that all existence in space and time implies existence superior to these conditions; he must maintain that some substance has existed eternally, under those conditions which bring it within the reach of man's senses. But the world of experience is known as a world of diversity. First of all, then, it is reasonable, from the irreducible diversities we behold, to conclude that the distinct species of matter, might have been varied, not merely in a

few nor in many, but in an infinite number of ways. Instead of fifty or sixty simples, might we not have had as many millions? Might not every atom have been endowed with a repulsion to all the rest? When the atheist tells us,—"Of the various possible forms which a world of matter may assume, you see the one which is," he starts with the unfounded hypothesis, that the few substances of this world are all which are or can be.

Their proportions and arrangement.

7. But this is not all. Suppose the number of simples to lie in the eternal necessity of material existence; it still remains that for one form of order, we may have an infinite number of forms of confusion. Consider, for example, the particles of dust, which the sunshine discovers to be floating in the room, and with the single reference to arrangement. Let us suppose the same particles to be suspended for ages in any given number of cubic feet of air, and to float with every accidental motion of the fluid which supports them. There is no reason in the nature of things, why they should not, in the course of time, fall into every possible arrangement; but what is the chance of their ever marshalling themselves to form the surface of some regular geometrical figure? Something so infinitely small, that we can readily believe it would not happen to all eternity. But what, if,

instead of the particles which fill a room, we take as many atoms as form the world; and if, instead of considering them with reference only to arrangement, we suppose each atom to possess peculiar properties of its own, and to have certain determinate relations to all the rest;—what then is the chance that the particles will be such in their properties, as at any time to combine in a form of order, or ever to give any thing but a chaos? If endless varieties of atoms may exist, and we have first to take the chance of having only a few varieties, bearing such and such chymical relations to one another, the chances against order are manifestly infinite. And if it be granted that the world contains *all possible varieties* of substances, we have still an inconceivable number of conditions to be satisfied, in the constitution of the atoms, and the quantity of each, if not for the formation of one mass, at least for that of a globe similar in its order and arrangement to this of ours; and want besides One Cause of their combination when we have obtained them. For there is room enough for atoms to roam about in the infinite space, without their troubling themselves to work together for one purpose, and to meet harmoniously in a little globe. Finite minds are less happy in their co-operation. The calculation of the chances, where there is no mind to order them, must deal with figures so immense, that the numbers of the stars,

and the distances of the most distant, sink into insignificance before them.

Of the substances which chymistry recognises as simple, some are gases, a few liquids, and, at ordinary temperatures, the greater number are solids. Some occur in great abundance, others are comparatively rare at the earth's surface. Of the gases, oxygen enters largely into the composition of the most common substances in nature. It is a chief constituent of air, of water, and of the substances which form the rocks and soils of the earth's surface. Suppose then the requisite elements to have been given for the constitution of the world; yet might not chlorine gas have been as abundant as oxygen, and oxygen even rarer than chlorine? It is difficult to conceive what would have been the result; possibly a mere chaos, certainly not a world adapted to any known forms of animal or vegetable life. Or the oxygen might have been in sufficient abundance for the earths, and have left nothing behind to combine with hydrogen or nitrogen in the waters and atmosphere. Again, is it a happy chance that the elements were given in their due proportions? If it were a necessity of nature, then at least this necessity is such as we might expect an Infinite Intelligence to have produced. It would seem that prior to all the properties by which alone matter is known to man, a Superior Power must have existed to order and combine

them in such connexion with one another as would evolve this world of earth, air, and water, which is fit to be the residence of mankind. And this is tantamount to affirming it prior in existence, and the Creator of all that can be known as material by the mind of man.

Geological conditions.

8. But suppose the simple bodies to have been given in their due proportions, as well as in their various kinds, how many further conditions were to be fulfilled for the composition of a world adapted to systems of organized beings. If all its atoms were now jumbled together in a chaos, what an infinity of circumstances must concur to bring it back to its present order. The geological, as well as the astronomical phænomena, may perhaps be combined in a scientific system of cosmogony; but the chymical, as well as the physical causes, will need to be referred to an Intelligent First Cause. Suppose the earth to have been already formed as a globe of molten matter; and at length, by the slow radiation of its heat during a long period, to have been encompassed with a solid crust. All the waters would, for a long time, be suspended in the atmosphere, and would surround the earth with a dense nebula of fog. During a subsequent period there would be a perpetual flooding rain of hot

[3] This argument was used, I find, in the time of Origen. (Princ. iv. 34.)

water, which would be immediately evaporated and would reascend. These fierce agencies of change would commence the disintegration of the primitive, and the formation of the stratified rocks. The same changes, in combination with forces arising from the contraction of the earth's crust, might give rise to the earthquakes and volcanoes which were so necessary for bringing the world into a habitable condition. By means of these mountain chains would be thrown up and plains elevated above the valleys, and it would thus become possible for the waters of the sea to be gathered together into one place, and the dry land to appear above the waters.

Here, again, it cannot but be remarked that nature has been most happy in the results even of those agencies of change which are regarded as most irregular. The earthquake, the volcano, and the flood have played important parts in preparing the dry land and the soils for the vegetable world, and all for the sustentation of the animal tribes. But by what happy accident was it arranged that, when the chasms of the earth had been formed, the sea, which claims so large a portion of the surface, was not sufficient to cover its great continents. Double the quantity of water would probably have hidden it to the mountain tops. It is another happy result of natural causes and convulsions that the mineral systems were disseminated, and

the carboniferous systems spread out within the earth; and then the rocks, which once lay level, were broken and thrown into inclined positions, and rendered accessible to the intelligent beings who were afterwards to find the deposits so essential to the comforts and the arts of life. We may imagine that many different results might have been determined by slight changes in the original conditions of things. It is impossible to enumerate more than a few of the instances, in which the world has been ordered and prepared for the habitation of man; but it may easily be seen that, as in the astronomical arrangements, an infinite number of orbits might have been given to the planets, which would have sent them careering in empty space, for one which has retained them through a thousand ages in their stability; so, for one combination of chymical and physical causes in the cosmogony which could furnish a world adapted to living beings, myriads might have been chosen which would have left it for ever in a state of chaos.

Maximum density of water.

One of the most remarkable instances of Creative Wisdom is shown in the maximum density of water. Like almost all other bodies, fluid and solid, it contracts as it cools; and, consequently, as the cold of winter continues, the upper film of all lakes and rivers becomes heavier than the body of water beneath it, and is continually descending

from the surface, till the whole mass is cooled down to a certain point. So that the deeper the water, the longer it is in freezing,—a point upon which Dr. Johnson was sceptical when he made his tour to the Hebrides. If this process continued, the whole depth of the water would at length be cooled down to the freezing point, and lakes and rivers would in severe winters be converted into solid masses of ice.

But, by a wise and beneficent arrangement of nature, water is here an exception to the laws of most substances. Within a few degrees of the freezing point it gains a maximum density, and, instead of continuing to contract and become heavier as it cools, it begins to expand and grow lighter. After this the coldest water remains at the surface till it freezes, and forms a warm covering to the rest during the continuance of the frost.

There is here wisdom of design surpassing human understanding. And a scheme of creation by law only enlarges the conception of wise purpose. The original gases of creation must have been so constituted, when the heat of the earth was so intense that no water could exist, as afterwards to give rise to this substance which is in so many ways essential to living beings, and possesses among its properties the unknown quality of its constitution, on which its law of contraction depends.

9. Suppose, then, the primæval substances of nature to have contained the causes of all the changes and progressions which have formed this world of rocks and soils, of water and air; we may next observe the admirable system of meteorological laws on which the vegetable world is so dependent. To appreciate the evidences of design manifested in the atmosphere and the weather, we must consider them in relation to the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The atmosphere is essential to the respiration, without which no individual of either kingdom can prolong its life. It furnishes oxygen to animals, carbon to vegetables. Had it been constituted of other gases, neither kingdom could have existed. But suppose the primæval causes to have been happily such, as must have formed it of its present constituent gases; we have still to search among those causes for other causes of the properties and relations of air and water, and of all the movements of the atmosphere, which have given rise to the present meteorological system of the globe. The atmosphere is the vehicle for the conveyance of water from the ocean to the land. For the earth to receive its supply of rain, it is necessary that the water rise in vapour from the ocean as well as from the land, be diffused over the surface of the continents, and again descend from the atmosphere in its liquid condition. The tendency of water to constant

evaporation supplies the air with moisture. The variations of temperature and of electrical condition again condense the vapour, and precipitate it in the form of rain or dew. We cannot conceive the intelligence which could have devised a more admirable system than that which is silently but perpetually drawing up the waters from the ocean, to let them fall as silently in the gentle dew of evening in places far from the sea, where they are so essential for the nourishment of vegetables, and thus indirectly to animal life.

The movements of the air, by which the transference is effected, are to be ascribed in part to causes already indicated,—the annual and diurnal motions of the earth. But other causes are not less important; in particular, the atmospheric currents, which depend upon the natural property of the air to be expanded by heat.

Concurrence of natural systems.

10. Let us consider, then, some of the causes and occasions which must concur,—and, it seems, the distinct systems of causes, reaching to the sun in distance, and going back through thousands of ages for their commencement,—which must conspire together for the growth of a single flower. The soil has been formed in the course of the long changes of geology. The sun furnishes the heat, which developes the vital properties of the plant, and the light, whence it derives its colours.

The atmosphere supplies it with carbon, and brings the moisture from the ocean, and sends down along with it some of the ammonia, which it has received from the decay of previous plants and animals. It is possible that the origin of these great systems may be traced backward to one course of cosmogony. The geological changes which have produced the soil, may have arisen in the same primitive state of things which gave existence to the atmosphere, the ocean, and perhaps even the earth itself, as a planet revolving round the sun. Possibly all the great movements of air and water, may have been continued from the original movements of matter. But if it be so, there are several systems of primitive causes, wholly distinct from one another; and of which some, as far as we can know, might have been originated without the rest.

Adaptations to animal life.

11. We might similarly advert to the relations of these great systems to the animal kingdom, and to the dependence of this upon the vegetable kingdom. It is here the leading fact, that no animal can form for itself the albumen, and similar substances, which are the constituent matter of its tissues. One animal may derive these substances from another: but they are produced in the vegetable world alone. If this then were to perish, the other also must soon cease to exist.

For one of many instances of the adaptation of the outward world to man, we may consider the organ of sight. What wondrous mechanism of vital forces is called into action in the human frame, for the formation and exact disposal of the retina, the humours, and all the muscles and glands of the eye. Its construction has been admirably described by many writers[6]; and if no other example were considered, this alone, whatever attempts may have been made, remains an unanswered and an unanswerable evidence of a Creative Intelligence immeasurably superior to any intelligence of man. And it is not to be considered merely by itself. It stands in its relations to the grand cosmical arrangements. The sun is the main source of its light, which is supplied through some unfailing and stupendous natural process. Or if the eye make use of artificial light, it is indebted to the oxygen of the atmosphere. Nor is this the only use of the atmosphere to the eye. It is the medium for the diffusion of the sun's rays, and the production of what we call day-light. Without it the whole sky would be intensely dark, except in the direction of the heavenly bodies; and we might pass from the blaze of sunshine to total darkness, between one side of a large building and the other.

[6] Paley, for instance.

All these instances of universal order, bear upon the question from which we commenced:—Is not mind prior in existence to matter? All concur in the answer which was given by the chymical relations of substances; and discover that as matter is posterior to intelligence in the possession of all the properties by which it can be known; so, in all its combinations and applications, it has been directed and governed by the same Intelligence which gave it being. Again we may repeat, if any can imagine there is not sufficient evidence of an Infinite Mind superior to the world; let him consider whether, as far as man can see, the world, in its universal order, and its least adaptations, in its innumerable designs and complexities, be not formed and arranged as if there were. Reason requires, in all these adaptations, an adequate cause of order, and of the very possibility of order. It finds one in a Supreme Being, Who with wise Intelligence selected and appointed, and by His Power, acting mediately or immediately,—by direct agency, or indirectly through an established system of laws,—communicated the various properties which we see the parts of matter to possess, brought them together in their due proportions, and adjusted them to the construction of the complicated scheme of nature.

We might farther allude to the adaptation

of the external world, to the moral and intellectual constitution of man; and have already dwelt upon those relations of mind and matter, by which the mind is developed into active life, and comes into possession of its faculties of perception and thought. This last instance especially forces us to the conclusion, that the distinct worlds of mind and matter are derived from one and the same First Cause.

Mystery of minuteness. In vegetation.

12. There is yet another question which should not be altogether passed over in this place;—that of the origin of life in the vegetable and animal worlds. We have briefly glanced at the conditions, under which the life of any individual is continued when it has commenced; but there are striking evidences of Divine Power and Intelligence in its commencement. To say nothing of the question of transmutation, or of the commencement of any species in the material world; we may observe such instances, in the case of every individual of any species. For the origin of each is as completely lost in the mystery of minuteness, as that of its species. We may suppose, if we will, that the future stem and leaves and flowers are all wrapped up in a minute form within the seed; but shall we think, with Malebranche[7], that the seed

[7] "Il ne paraît pas même déraisonable de penser qu'il y a des arbres infinis dans un seul germe." Recherche, vi. i.

of any plant we commit to the ground, contains within it the seeds of the next season, and each of these those of the following, and so on to endless generations. The atheist delights in infinite chains: will he be disposed to apply his theory in this case, and to hold that an infinite number of the plants of all future seasons to eternity, are inclosed within the minute particle, which he can scarcely distinguish from a grain of sand? Why, even this supposition puts an end to the all-sufficiency of matter. A single step carries us beyond all its known or conceivable properties. Or shall we assign to each individual the powers of drawing from nature the requisite materials, and disposing them in the exact order for the formation of the particular particles which will reproduce its kind, and no other? Marvellous then, however common, are the powers and properties of every organized being. Are these powers to be included among material properties? It may be answered, perhaps, that we can reach but a little way into the mystery of minuteness, and must impose a limit to our curiosity. But is there no intelligence to reach farther than our own? Does this wonderful being, or class of beings—this material substance, carry on its recondite processes, as if it were the Most Intelligent of all, and produce results, such as we should conceive the Most Intelligent would originate, and so veil its procedure in obscurity, that

no mind can trace it farther than the mind of man?

Every tree which adorns the landscape comes forth from the mystery of minuteness, and contains this mystery within itself. Each possesses a certain appearance, an elegant form, a particular colour of its foliage, and shape of its single leaf. But in what does the trunk of the living tree, differ from the dead trunk which is still held up by its roots? In what does the oak differ so permanently from every other kind? There is something assuredly which causes its vitality, something which makes it to differ, and that something has been derived from the acorn, which is so simple to all appearance. What eye can discern the secret property? What microscope can discover it? Perhaps, at last, what human mind could understand it?

In origin of material world.

13. It is possible that geology may carry back the origin of the material world to a similar mystery of minuteness. When we have read the indubitable tale of countless ages, and have been carried back through periods of slow progression, and over epochs of sudden catastrophe, to a globe of fire, we are left inquiring whether the fused matter had been vapour; and, if it had, whence then this vapour, and what the principles, if they were immanent therein, which have evolved all the

changes of its state? What the causes of sudden revolutions, interrupting the settled order of things? Were these the results of causes already resident in the primæval matter, or were they effected by extraneous agency? We might go on to ask whether the present order of things will also come to an end, and give place to other scenes, and new forms and varieties of living beings; and may easily see that, for an answer, it will be necessary to descend deeper than will ever be possible to human power, into the present nature of material existence.

In the human frame.

14. The same mystery of minuteness, unsearchable by eye or microscope, hangs over the commencement of human life. The microscope may go a few steps beyond the eye, but it cannot search the depths of being. The mystery remains as unapproachable as at first.

But is there no single instance in the universe, in which the mind is able to look beyond this mystery of minuteness, into which material existence may be seen to run in every direction? Yes: there is one such instance, to every organized being who possesses intelligence; one and one only: but in this one he may find perhaps the solution of the deep problem. Let him study the channels of communication between the brain and the extremities of the nervous organism; let him

examine with the best of microscopes the nervous fibres, or the retina of the eye; let him attend to the physical actions of the waves of light or sound upon the eye or ear; and try to discover their exact effect upon the nerves. Here again he is soon lost in the mystery of minuteness. It baffles the utmost skill of art or science, to search the intricacies of the nervous constitution; much more to comprehend its movements, and the means of producing perception, or receiving the mandates of the will. But though his powers of observation are soon eluded, he can here look beyond observation. He can discover that the physical causes pass through this deep mystery, and produce the impressions of sensibility; or come forth from it, when the will determines, and give rise to motion in the world. He cannot run through the whole course from mind to matter; he has organs of sense to perceive the one, and an inward consciousness to observe the other; but he has not the requisite organ or power for following the communication throughout. Yet he can see notwithstanding that there is a communication. He can see that physical actions give rise to sensibility, and that the will gives rise to physical movements in the world. He can see that beyond the mystery of minuteness, in the only instance in which he can look beyond it, *there is mind.*

We have here then an analogical argument, but

one, it may be, of great weight. We see everywhere instances of stupendous power in nature; but when we try to search it, in any particular direction, to its source, we are always carried to something too minute to be followed any farther. Every living being, every living tree or flower, perhaps even the world itself, has issued forth from this mystery to its development. Nay, we are involved in a similar mystery, if we attempt to account for the present existence of the simplest particle of material substance. Is it not more than a probable conclusion, that mind here also lies beyond the mystery; and that the powers of nature are perpetually issuing forth according to the mandates of a Living Will? This inference is analogical. But the inference of Intelligence from design;—the conclusion that, in some way, and by some means, Intelligence directs and orders all things, is not one of analogy, but of causality.

Divine Unity and Immensity.

15. Thus far then on the Wisdom of the Creator as manifested in nature. His Immensity and Unity may be inferred from the immensity and unity of creation. The First Cause exceeds the vastness of the universe, and this to man is tantamount to infinity. Man and nature are finite; but both stretch towards the infinite;—man, both in the unavoidable results of his first principles of reason and in the natural feelings and aspirations

of his soul; nature, in her illimitable vastness as much as in her unsearchable minuteness. If the microscope can carry us but a little way in exploring the mystery of the world beneath us, the telescope is equally incompetent to search the vast spaces above. If we suppose the microscope to have discovered in the monad the smallest and most elementary form of a living being, and the telescope to have revealed the most distant star or nebula, yet in the one case, as in the other, the limits of knowledge lie far within the circle of being. The questions remain, What is this principle of life which distinguishes the monad from the speck of dust? What is the nature of the nebula; or, if it be a system of suns, what are the first principles of material being? what the unlimited space which holds the universe?

As far, however, as observation can carry us, external nature furnishes abundant evidence of the unity and immensity of the Creator; evidence which may fail indeed,—for what will not?—to repress the audacity of scepticism, yet sufficient to satisfy the reasonable, such as the finite can afford to the Infinite; that is, such as is possible in the nature of things.

This evidence consists in the immensity of space and of material being, and in the continued unity of the globe through the long periods of the past. Astronomy discovers the unity and immensity of the

Supreme Being in space, or beyond it; geology, in time, or beyond it; chymistry, in the reality of all present conditioned existence, or beyond it.

Distances of the stars.

16. Astronomy has taught us to look into the depths of space from star to star, and from system to system, through distances all but infinite. Compared with the immense fields of the stellar universe, the solar system sinks into an infinitesimal speck. The immense distances and enormous magnitudes of the stars are beyond question. It has long been known that they must be situated at distances from the earth, vastly greater than any measures of the solar system. It had been ascertained that the nearest of them cannot be less than twenty millions of millions of miles from us, a distance which is travelled by light in not less than three years. Yet light passes over 192,000 miles in a second of time, and from the sun to the earth in eight minutes. So that the nearest of the fixed stars is seen by light which set off on its journey three years ago ; and the more distant may have been thousands of years extinct, and may still be visible in our sky by the light they formerly emitted. Of late years, an approximation has been made to the actual distances of some of the stars. It cannot be said that any one determination of this element could be relied upon, if it stood alone. The angles on which the measurement depends,

although they are the angles of triangles erected on the diameter of the earth's orbit, that is, on nearly two hundred millions of miles, are yet found to be so extremely minute, that it is impossible to separate them from the small unavoidable errors of instruments and of observation. It is only by the agreement of numerous results, that numbers have been obtained which can be regarded as approximate values of any of the stellar distances[8]. But that the least of these values is enormous, has long been known with certainty.

From this fact it has been shown, by means of observations of the comparative brightness of the sun and stars, that many of these bodies,—Sirius, for instance,—have an intrinsic splendour far surpassing that of the sun, and are therefore probably of far greater magnitude. In the case of some of the binary systems, the masses of the systems have been ascertained to be on the same scale of magnitude with that of the sun. To call the stars suns involves therefore no arbitrary assumption. It has been shown also by means of the double stars, that the law of attraction extends to the distant systems of the universe.

17. Yet it is more than probable that beyond this stellar system of ours, which forms the milky

The nebulæ.

[8] See a paper by Mr. Main, in the Transactions of the Royal Astronomical Society.

way and firmament of our sky, there are other stellar systems at so great distances from the eye, as to occupy but very minute portions of our heavens. Many of the nebulæ present an appearance similar to that which would be assumed by the whole stellar system of our heavens, if it were seen from a sufficient distance. It has perhaps been shown that this is not the character of all the nebulæ. Some of them probably are mere clouds of gaseous matter. They may perhaps be permanently such; or it is possible that some of them, as Laplace conjectured, may be the still diffused matter of future systems of suns. If they were all masses of stars like our heavens, they must all be vastly more distant than any of the stars, and the irresolvable more distant than the resolvable nebulæ. But from Sir John Herschel's observations of the clouds of Magellan,—two very fine luminous nebulæ, well known to visitors of the southern hemisphere,—this does not appear to be the case. The larger of these presents, he says, "a constitution of astonishing complexity." It abounds in "large patches and tracts of nebulosity in every stage of resolution," stars and clusters, nebulæ resolvable and irresolvable, and some of them "of a character quite peculiar[9]." And yet the apparent diameter of the whole mass is as much as 6°. If, then, its actual diameter be as long in depth as

[9] Quoted in the Plurality of Worlds, chap. vii.

in breadth, it will follow that the distance between its more remote and nearer parts is something more than one-tenth of its distance from us [1]. To suppose the distance of its stars and clusters to be very small, in comparison of that of its nebulous matter, would therefore be a very improbable hypothesis.

But if some of the nebulæ be too near the earth to be considered stellar systems, it will not follow that the whole of them are mere clouds of luminous vapour. It is very probable, from other observations of nature, that there are the greatest diversities in their constitution. There are certainly great differences among the stars. We have stars single, double, and multiple; nebular, variable, and even occasional stars, which have become visible and soon died away. It is possible that some of the nebulæ may be luminous matter in connexion with large stars, as perhaps the nebula in Orion with the multiple star; while others, as that in Hercules, may be distant systems of suns. "That by far the larger share of them consist of stars there can be little doubt." So wrote Sir John Herschel many years ago [2], and this may still be true, notwithstanding his observations of the Ma-

[1] It may be seen, by an easy calculation, or by constructing a figure, that a line subtending an angle of 6°, must lie at a distance from the eye of something less than one-tenth of its length.

[2] Astron., Lardner's Cycl., § 625.

gellanic clouds, or any other evidences to the contrary.

"In the interminable range of system upon system, and firmament upon firmament, which we thus catch a glimpse of, the imagination is bewildered and lost." Yet in these immensities of matter and of space, we have evidences of the same unity in diversity which is every where manifest in the world. Astronomy bears testimony with the world in which we live, that "there are diversities of operation, but it is the same God Which worketh all in all."

Other evidences.

18. The discoveries of Geology terminate in the same conclusion. We pass through long periods of progress, and over sudden changes and catastrophes; but all, after ages of ages, are found to have evolved harmonious results. The very convulsions of the earth were among the steps most essential in its preparation for man. The inference is confirmed by the remains of former animal and vegetable kingdoms. Many varieties are met with, far more of extinct than of existing species. But they are all members of one great system of creation. They are bound to one another in similar relations, with the different systems now existing in the world, and are always adapted to the constitution of the globe at the time of their existence. Chymical science bears a similar testimony.

On its numerous diversities, and the constant unity in diversity, it is unnecessary to speak farther.

This then is the testimony of the material world, in whatever direction we may look. In its magnitude, and in its minuteness, in the distant causes of the past, and in the deep causes of the present, it stretches from the finite towards the Infinite, and every where discovers itself to have been created and ordered by Intelligent Agency. Is not this then the Intelligence of a Being, One and Infinite? At least every thing is ordered as if it were, and this truth may be of practical moment. Reason goes farther, and affirms plainly that it is. The view of an Unwavering Omnipotence, an All-seeing Intelligence, an Infinite Wisdom of Purpose; in spaces so distant, in times so remote, in causes so deep; may carry on the expectations to the future. And if in all the changes and convulsions of nature, no particle of matter has been lost; it is more than probable that that other being, which, in every act of perception, is revealed along with matter, and has an equal claim to be regarded as real,—a being possessed of properties and powers, even more wonderful than any in the visible universe, —whose thoughts, feelings, desires, stretch beyond the immensities of space, and time, and cause, to the Infinite, the Eternal, the Self-existent,—that this being also must be imperishable.

CHAPTER III.

THE DIVINE WISDOM IS UNSEARCHABLE. THE PLURALITY OF WORLDS.

Inverse question of final causes.

1. The theological design argument infers an Intelligent Creator from the manifestations of Intelligent Agency in nature. It is by all means necessary, especially when atheists are bending their efforts to discredit the argument, to keep it distinct from an inverse problem of final causes. This is an attempt to deduce particular instances of design, unknown by any observation, from the known Intelligence of the Creator. From design to infer a designer, we have maintained to be strictly reasonable: but this is far short of any pretence to search the depths of the Divine Wisdom, and deduce His Agency where it is unknown. This Ixionic flight of reason must soon carry it beyond its sphere, and may be expected to terminate in a downfall. The theological argument makes no such pretences, and is not disparaged by their result.

This inversion of the argument has recently been made prominent, in the inquiry respecting inhabitants of other worlds [1]. Some remarks upon it, in this view, may be useful; and may serve, at the same time, to illustrate and enlarge the conceptions of the Divine Unity and Immensity, suggested by the view of physical nature.

Final causes upon this question.

2. The question thus introduced may be stated to be this:—Have we good reason to infer the existence of other intelligent races from the existence of other material worlds? This world of our own may be said, we have seen, to consist, in all knowledge, of two worlds, that of mind and that of matter, wholly distinct; but bound together in some deep, though unknown, relation to one another. May we infer then, from the perception of the numerous large bodies of the firmament, that these also are tenanted by intelligent beings? This question has been answered from final causes. "If Jupiter has not been created like the earth to be the seat of animal and intellectual life, for what purpose could so gigantic a world have been framed?" "Why does the sun give it days and nights and years? Why do its moons throw their silver light upon its continents and seas? Why do its equatorial breezes blow perpetually over its plains?

[1] Reference is made in this chapter to "The Plurality of Worlds, an Essay," and "More Worlds than One," by Sir David Brewster.

unless to supply the wants, and administer to the happiness of living beings?" To all such questions it appears to be a legitimate answer that *we do not know*, and that it is not necessary we should.

The theological argument is founded upon the adaptation of means to ends, when both the means and the end are before our eyes. When we see innumerable combinations and adaptations of things, conspiring to some good end, we cannot but recognise the marks of wise design, and must acknowledge the Hand of a Beneficent Author of nature. But even in this case we should often be mistaken, if we inferred that in any single instance of design, we perceived the whole purpose of the Almighty. The powers of nature are so numerous and interwoven, their effects so various, their operations so complex, and so far hidden from observation, in the deep and silent laboratory of God, that we can have no more than a very partial knowledge of any of His ways. As many causes may combine to one end, so each of these causes may be conducive, at the same time, to other ends. Thus the air, for example, is not only fit for the respiration of animals and plants; it supports the birds in their flight; it bears up the clouds above the earth; it sustains and carries, in its currents, the watery vapour which is to nourish the earth; it is instrumental in the production of fire, and in

the diffusion of the sun's rays in daylight and twilight; it is the reservoir of gases given off in the decay of former animals and plants; and, in addition to all, it is the common medium of sound. We should be mistaken if we supposed any one of these to be the final cause in the creation of the atmosphere, without the others; or all the purposes we know, to exhaust the design of the Creator. Again, the sun gives us light and heat, and fulfils, by means of them, innumerable purposes which are essential to the life of man; but we cannot conclude that we have discovered the whole purpose of its creation.

We are still more liable to error when we attempt to assign the purpose, because some part of nature appears to be sufficient for it; when we have no experience of its application to this end. Final causes are a sound foundation for inductive inference respecting the nature and character of a designer, human or divine; they cannot be applied deductively, to furnish increased knowledge of his operation, where it is unknown. Nor, if we find a work of creation does not answer some purpose which we expected, can we be justified in concluding that it serves no end whatever. If any one were satisfied to reflect that the larger planets with their moons and rings, though they be destitute of inhabitants, are at least "vast scenes of God's presence, and of the activity with which He

carries into effect every where the laws of nature;" if one can be content to know "that the vulgar eye is delighted with the sight of planets made gorgeous by the telescope, that astronomers are entranced with the study of their movements and their perturbations, and that the useful art of navigation derives some advantage from the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites," yet he cannot conclude that he knows the purposes of their existence. And, on the other hand, if he fail to discover "the grandeur, the utility, the beauty, the poetry, of the two almost invisible stars which usurp the celestial names of Uranus and Neptune, and which have been seen by none but a very few even of the cultivators of astronomy," yet may he not infer, that "they are doubtless the abodes of life and intelligence, the colossal temples whence their Creator is recognised and worshipped, the remotest watch-towers of our system, from which His works may be better studied, and His glories more easily descried."

Observations of this kind are founded upon the supposition, that we are under the necessity of either finding the Divine Purpose in the existence of the distant planets, or of concluding that they are without use or purpose in the creation. But there is a legitimate escape from the dilemma, in the truth of Scripture and common sense,—'The ways of God are past finding out.' We can never

have more than a partial knowledge of His designs, or of the conditions under which creation is possible. Conditions, and relations, and possibilities of things, it is manifest there must be; whether they be regarded as resting in the nature and relations of created things, in their dependence upon the Creator, or in His holy Will or Nature. The assumption that they must be known by man is clearly inadmissible.

It is not difficult perhaps to frame conjectures, which may be conceived to be solutions of the question; although, under the limitations of our knowledge, it is impossible to verify them. It is conceivable that the planets may have come into existence along with the earth, in one course of cosmogony. They may be productions of general laws, of which some only subserve a useful purpose. They may have carried off materials, before the formation of the earth, which were essential in the cosmogony, but would have been prejudicial to its future inhabitants had they remained. They may even now be necessary for maintaining that meteorological economy on which life is dependent. And they may serve many Wise Purposes of which we can know nothing. Whatever truth may belong to such conjectures, it is certain that the intention of the Creator, in any of His works, can never be more than partially known, possible that it may be wholly unknown.

BOOK III. CHAP. III. Inapplicable analogies.

3. To affirm the existence of universal life upon universal matter, is something very different from concluding that a kingdom must contain a king and subjects. These go to constitute the kingdom, so that the argument is a mere identical judgment. And it is very different from concluding that houses must have inhabitants, and railway-trains passengers. We know that houses are built for families, and railway-trains for passengers; and,—though general rules may even here fail in particular cases,—yet we are perfectly acquainted with the purposes of their construction. To affirm that we have the same reason for connecting universal life with universal matter, is to affirm that we know the purpose for which worlds have been created,—the very question in dispute.

Such arguments have as little weight on either side. One has been taken on the other side, from the case of an inhabited island, having many other islands visible in the distance. It would be absurd, they say, if an inhabitant of the first island were to conclude, without further evidence, that all the other islands are inhabited like his own. This illustration, it is answered, is unfair, because we know beforehand that "hundreds of islands are without inhabitants, and can assign a very good reason why they were made, and why they are not inhabited." In like manner we know beforehand that houses generally have inhabitants, and are

built for this very purpose. We have no more reason to argue from inhabited houses or crowded railway-trains that there are intelligent inhabitants of other worlds, than from desolate islands that there are not. All such illustrations are inapplicable to the question.

Partial resemblances to the earth.

4. Concerning inhabitants of other worlds, certain knowledge is unattainable, and dogmatism is out of place. The most probable conclusion, which can only be regarded as conjectural, is to be drawn by analogy from the operation of the Creator in this world of ours. But this analogical argument requires a very different statement, from what it receives in passages which have been quoted from Dr. Lardner and Sir Wm. Herschel. That the planets are in some particulars similar to the earth,—that they are solid globes (some of them certainly are), revolve upon their axes, have, some of them, satellites,—may furnish evidence that they are, so far, *adapted* for inhabitants. But they may fail in others of the innumerable conditions which are essential to any form of organized life; and if all were satisfied, it would not follow that they are inhabited.

The moon, for instance, is a solid globe; it has mountains and valleys; and may, in several particulars, resemble the earth; but in many others, it is totally different. Common astronomical obser-

vations prove it to be almost, if not totally destitute of both air and water. Partial differences between the earth and them are, in general, as good evidence that other worlds are not inhabited, as partial resemblances that they are. If we are to believe the moon inhabited because the earth serves it for a moon,—a far larger indeed than it is to us,—we have as good ground for concluding, that it is inhabited only on one side, since the greater part of the other never sees the earth at all.

But the known differences in this case tell far more against inhabitants, than the known resemblances in their favour. Air and water are essential to all forms of animal and vegetable life of which we have any knowledge; but it is not essential to them, that there should be high mountains and deep valleys, nor any at all, where there is no water; nor that a large luminary should adorn their nocturnal sky.

That a planet turns on its axis, that it has its days and nights, its summers and winters, its land, and sea, and atmosphere,—such particulars do not extend to any *cause* of inhabitants, and can furnish an analogical argument of little value, in evidence of their existence in any particular case.

Have all things their sufficient purpose?

5. But the argument from analogy gains some weight for probable conclusions, when it is con-

sidered with reference to the First Cause of all things, and is applied to the general character of creation. In the defect of better evidence, it may be conjectured, with some probability, that the Universal Agency of the Creator will bear some general analogy to its manifestations in this little world.

The question arises then,—Can we say that nothing has been made in vain, in this world of ours? Can we know that in the existence, not only of the various kinds and classes of things, but of every individual of every kind, there is a Divine Purpose which is invariably fulfilled? Many wise and pious men have clung to this opinion, and have endeavoured to maintain that every individual is subservient to some useful end, though its end may often be unknown. And it is a sublime conception of Infinite Power, that every existing thing is as much its immediate product, and engages as closely its providential care, as though it were the sole result of Creative agency. But the opinion is attended with many difficulties. Wise and good men have been unable to extend the immediate agency of the Creator to all the subordinate results of general laws[2]. Some Chris-

[2] The question of general and particular determinations of the Divine Will is considered by Leibnitz in his "Théodicée," Part II. His opinion is (§ 206), "Dieu n'a aucune volonté sur les événemens individuels, qui ne soit une conséquence d'une vérité ou d'une volonté générale." And again (§ 211), "Je crois donc que Dieu

tians have believed, that while all things have proceeded originally from the Divine agency, and are still subject to an overruling Providence, yet that derangements and perversions of created agents are effected by intelligent powers of evil: an opinion which it would be as difficult to confute as the former.

But questions of this kind, however interesting, and however momentous in their import to man, soon run beyond the sphere of the understanding. It is enough here to observe that the admission of partial evils, or of an over-productiveness of natural laws has not appeared, to profound and pious writers, to be incompatible with a system of optimism, nor inconsistent with Infinite Wisdom. We may believe the universal creation to be the best possible, effected by the simplest possible means. There may be more economy of power in producing effects of nature by means of general laws, which involve much waste, than by any other means possible in the nature of things.

peut suivre un plan simple, fécond, régulier; mais je ne crois pas que celui qui est le meilleur et le plus régulier soit toujours commode en même temps à toutes les créatures, et je le juge à posteriori; car celui que Dieu a choisi ne l'est pas." Hence his system is an optimism of the universe, not of each single part. Of all possible systems of creation, that which has been admitted to actual existence, is, with all its evils, the best and fairest within the eternal possibilities of things. This theory runs through all his writings, and is very beautifully illustrated in the story of Sextus, which concludes the Théodicée. How far satisfactory is another question.

6. But whatever opinion may be received upon this difficult question, it is, at all events, certain of the world we live in, that many things exist which serve no useful purpose *discoverable by man;* and many which certainly do not effect the manifest purpose of their class. Innumerable individuals, in the animal and vegetable worlds, seem produced only to decay. Many seeds ripen but to rot; many animals die as soon as they are born, many even before they have begun to live. These instances cannot be overlooked in the question of the general agency of the Creator. They make it evident that,—even if the Divine laws be infinite in comprehensiveness with reference to all individuals, as well as infinite in the extent of their application,—there will still be no warrant for the doctrine of universal life upon universal matter. It is a pious and a reasonable doctrine, that every single dispensation of Providence has its good and sufficient causes. It is also possible that the first ordination of natural laws may have determined, by sufficient causes, the existence of every individual, even of things which appear to man the most trivial and useless. The seed which rots may serve its purpose in the universe. But the individual does not, at all events, serve that purpose which is known to man to be the common purpose of its kind.

The result is evident, if our conclusion upon the

Universal Agency of the Creator be deduced from His General Agency in the world. If the stars lay, equally with the earth, within our sphere of observation, we might find in them similar instances of the over-productiveness of natural laws. Worlds, as well as the lesser productions of nature, may have come into being through general laws, and may dissolve and disappear before they fulfil the purpose, which we regard as that of the world's existence. It would seem then to be a probable conclusion, judging of the unknown by what is known, that the whole material universe has its desolate rocks, and wastes, and oceans, as well as this world in which we live. The islands may not all be peopled which are scattered in the archipelago of immensity. Of the innumerable worlds above us, many, it is probable, fulfil the same end as our own in the life of intelligent beings; while others serve, if any purpose at all, at least none which can be known to man.

Geological argument.

7. This view is confirmed by an argument which has been lately advanced [3], and which appears to be conclusive against universal intelligence in the universe of matter. It is certain that the world existed many thousands, perhaps millions, of years before the commencement of the human race.

[3] Plurality of Worlds, chap. vi.

Man is but a comparative stranger upon the earth. He has been here but a few years of many ages. Although the agencies of change must have been much more powerful and rapid during the early geological epochs than they are at present; yet, when every allowance has been made, these epochs will still be immense. And in all the remains of these long ages there is no relic of human being, but the clearest evidences that the world was long unfit for his habitation.

Hence the argument of geology, in answer to rash conjectures from astronomy. The earth "has been occupied for myriads of years by the lowest, the least conscious forms of life; by shell-fish, corals, sponges," and therefore it is not improbable that "the seas and continents of other planets may be occupied at present with a life no higher than this, or with no life at all." "The intelligent part of creation is thrust into the compass of a few years in the course of myriads of ages; why not then into the compass of a few miles in the expanse of systems?" "If the earth was for ages a turbid mass of lava and of mud, why may not Mars or Saturn be so still?"

Its extent.

8. This argument appears to be conclusive against the notion, that all the material systems are now tenanted by intelligent beings. But nei-

ther this nor any other argument can be alleged to show that, of the innumerable orbs of space, this little world of ours is the only seat of life to reasonable and sensitive creatures. This universal negative is as improbable, to say the least, as the opposite universal affirmative is hasty and unsupported. The attempt to establish either conclusion as even probable, must go beyond the province of man. To discover the universal condition of the stars and planets, he must launch into the infinite depths, which separate the creature from the Creator. All the evidence within his reach can sustain but a modest conjecture, upon the general character of the creation.

The solar system.

9. There is perhaps but one body in the universe, besides the comets, the asteroids, and smaller meteoric stones (which may be left out of the account), on which it is possible to speak with any degree of certainty. There can be little doubt that the moon is unfit for the habitation of any organized animal, if it even afford the materials for its frame. And whatever varieties of being may be allowed, in the question of living inhabitants of other worlds; we must at least assume them to possess a delicate organization, for the communication between mind and matter. It is not a question of the existence of spirits,

but of minds united to material frames; which must therefore possess the means of perceiving and acting upon the world without.

The absence of air and water, and consequently of a vegetable world, would appear to be conclusive against inhabitants of the moon: and these are not the only difficulties of the supposition [4]. Seen through large telescopes, it presents the appearance of a huge globe of stone, covered with innumerable craters of extinct volcanoes, and vast sheets of alluvial lava; and suggests, to the least imagination, an almost painful feeling of awful desolation.

It is impossible to speak, with any certainty, of the sun or planets; still less of any of the stars. But it is certain, from the little that is known of the physical condition of other bodies of the solar system, that inhabitants of the sun, or of the distant planets, if they exist at all, must possess organisms very different from that of man. Their corporeal frame and organs of sensation must be such, that "the feeling hearts which would find sympathy" in other worlds, might as well look for it in worlds of spirit, as in material worlds so different from the earth. We may be tolerably sure that no communication could take place, between the inhabitants of the earth, and those

[4] Plurality of Worlds, chap. ix. Also Sir John Herschel's account of its physical constitution; Astron., chap. vi.

of the sun or Neptune, by means of their material organs.

The body which approaches nearest in physical condition to the earth, is the planet Mars. It possesses seas and continents, an atmosphere and clouds, and does not differ considerably from the earth, in its light, its heat, or its gravitation. The white spots at its poles, which are said, by Sir John Herschel, to disappear when they have been long exposed to the sun, and to be greatest when just emerging from the long night of their polar winter, would seem to show that its torrid zone must be at least as warm as the temperate zone of the earth. These circumstances go far to prove, that this planet is adapted to inhabitants little different in organization from mankind.

But whatever may be the probability of this opinion, there can be no reason to consider it inconsistent with the Divine Wisdom, that the earth *may be* the only inhabited globe of the solar system. It has been conjectured that the planets may be essential to the economy of the earth,—that "the solar system may be a machine acting for the benefit of the earth and its inhabitants." Yet it is equally possible, and consistent with the complex agency of the Creator, that the earth may, in the same way, be part of a machine acting for the benefit of Mars and its inhabitants.

Little need be said of the stars, and of any particular star little can be said to any purpose. Any one of them may or may not be attended by inhabited planets, may or may not be itself inhabited. But that, of the countless hosts of space, this little world alone is the home of rational beings,—that all the rest are regions of desolation,—is at least as improbable a conjecture, as that all are regions of life and thought. We may avoid the one exaggeration, without falling into the other. The world has had, before this, abundant experience of the interminable controversies, which arise from the common mistake of flying from one extreme to another, and defending both of them by errors and exaggerations.

Many worlds: One Creator.

10. The existence of many material worlds, with their various vegetable and animal kingdoms, is not inconsistent with the unity of creation. There may be many intelligent races, as well as many material systems, in the universe of One Creator. If it be thought reasonable or expedient, to "clear off" the inhabitants of other systems, it is but a natural step beyond, to clear off the systems themselves. But they are too many and too vast, to be dispatched by a wild fancy, that "the distant stars may be sparks or fragments, struck off in the formation of the

solar system,"—"sparks which darted from the awful anvil of the Creator, when the solar system lay incandescent thereon." The unity of creation cannot need to be supported on such a figment.

The innumerable stars and systems may possibly have originated in one cosmogony with the solar system; although it may exceed all human research to trace them back to their commencement. The proper motion of the sun in space, may be an indication of its relations to other parts of the universe. But whether or no, it cannot be necessary that all material and mental existence should be comprehended in one progressive scheme, before we can acknowledge the Unity of the Creator; nor can we infer from the Unity of the Creator, that His works must all have had their commencement in one Creative Act. Even in our own world, we have seen there is good reason to regard the commencement of the different species of organized beings, as distinct from the commencement of the world itself, and independent of it. We may anticipate that other inhabited globes would furnish instances, like those on earth, of the resemblances and relations, which connect beings of different orders and species with one another, and with the universe in which they live. Professor Owen states it as a probable conjecture, that "the conceivable modifications of the vertebrate archetype," which are not found in any of the species inhabit-

ing the earth, may occur among the species of other worlds. Nor is this the only evidence of the unity of creation. All material worlds with their denizens exist in space. The minds of their inhabitants must therefore resemble man in the form of their intuition. And it is probable, from the similarity of their outward world as extended substance, and as illuminated by light similar to the sun's, that they have similar powers of perception, intelligence, and action. Many of them may be expected to be, in some sense, progressive beings [5]; although their intellectual history may vary in many ways, and may be totally different from that of the human race. And they must be bound in similar relations to the Creator. The law of right is Divine, and therefore superior to all worlds. It rests ultimately in the character of the Self-existent Being. It is binding upon all His rational creatures, in all time, and in all the spaces of the universe; of universal and eternal obligation. There is no greater improbability *a priori*, in the existence of many races of beings,

[5] It has been thought "a great licence of hypothesis" to believe in the existence of many progressive races, and much weight is laid upon this objection by "The Plurality of Worlds" (chap. iv.). The argument appears to be, that beings of a special character cannot be assumed to exist in other worlds, because, if they do exist, they must have a special character. We know that intelligent as well as unintelligent animals do exist, and can have no reason to consider the repetition of the Divine Agency in the creation of brutes, more probable *a priori* than in that of rational beings.

bound in certain relations to that Eternal Law,—no greater improbability in the conscience of an inhabitant of Jupiter,—than in that of beings bound in certain relations to space and time. Creative agency may be extended to the repetition of moral and intellectual forms of thought, as well as of pure intuitions.

The Divine Infinity.

11. In the discussions of this question, several mistakes appear to have arisen from defective conceptions of the Divine Immensity. Thus it is sometimes allowed, that there is nothing derogatory to Infinite Wisdom in the waste of the seeds of plants, because some of each kind are subservient to reproduction; but that a single world is too great a waste in creation to be supposed. "The size of Jupiter alone," it has been said, "is a proof that it must have been made for some good and useful purpose." Acorns in this philosophy are estimated as trifles, but worlds are too great to be made for nothing. But a man would find it as difficult to create an acorn as to create a world: and a single star or planet can be no more than a grain of sand, in the immensity of the visible universe; the universe itself no more in the Infinity of the Creator of all.

Objections to a cosmogony through second causes, have the same foundation. Second causes are admitted in this little world; but the worlds

themselves are too large to be a single step removed from the immediate Agency of the Creator. It is no disparagement of His Wisdom, that we meet with monsters and abortions in the world; but a theory which admits abortive worlds is stigmatised as replete with danger. Plants may fail in the making, but not planets. But can it be more irreverent to suppose a planet may have "failed in the making," and given rise to the numerous asteroids, than to suppose one of them to have been burst in fragments after it was made? To speak of bits of planets which have failed in the making, may, in the present state of knowledge, appear to many an objectionable expression, but not to one who is accustomed to think of a cosmogony through second causes. It can mean no more than that such fragments are exceptional to the usual course of nature. We have too limited a view of the Divine Operation, and too slight knowledge of the conditions of creation, to be competent to pronounce any apparent failure of its ordinary processes, a blemish on the works of the Almighty.

It appears also to admit of question, whether all the speculations on this subject have not originated in the same defective conceptions of the Infinite. And, to speak with deference, would not this have been a sufficient answer to the objection discussed with so much eloquence by Dr.

Chalmers[6]? It is thus stated by himself: "How is it consistent with the dignity, the impartiality, the comprehensiveness of God's proceedings, that He should make so special and pre-eminent a provision for the salvation of the inhabitants of this earth, when there are such myriads of other worlds, all of which may require the like provision, and all of which have an equal claim to the Creator's care?" But why should the care of the Creator, in *any* of His operations, be limited by the knowledge or conceptions of man? All the writers upon this question appear to assume that when the Son of God became man, He divested Himself of the Essential Nature of His Divinity, and became finite though He had been Infinite. It is the Christian doctrine, that the Divine Nature is in a mysterious manner united to the human, in the Saviour of the world; but it does not therefore become confined within the conditions of finite being. Scripture teaches no such impossibility. It may be a question between Romanists and Protestants, whether, in consequence of the Incarnation, the Human Substance receives in Christ the Attributes of the Divine, but no theologian can imagine that the Divine Nature becomes limited to the conditions of the human. God is always and essentially Infinite. There

[6] Astronomical Discourses.

ought to be no more difficulty in conceiving His Omnipresence in His works of grace, than in those of nature. The Divine Infinity may extend to the mysterious communion of the Incarnation, as well as to the less intimate Presence of the Creator with all His works.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DIVINE HOLINESS.

BOOK III. CHAP. IV.

Goodness includes holiness.

1. When the Creator is regarded as a Being of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, the word Goodness is intended to include Holiness. "We understand by the Goodness of God," says Dr. Chalmers, "not His Benevolence or His Kindness alone. The term is comprehensive of all Moral Excellence[1]." The present state of religion, both in doctrine and in practice, makes it important, in considering the Divine Attributes, to give a prominent place to the Holiness of the Deity, or His complacency in moral goodness and order, and His repugnance to moral evil. Indeed it is always important to remember that He is holy and just, because the human heart is prone to think of Him

[1] Bridgewater Treatise, chap. viii. § 6.

as simple Benevolence[2], and to disbelieve His judgments upon sin. Men have always been glad to be told that there is some mistake in the supposed connexion between sin and death. In the course of life the moral powers are often worn out by vicious habits, but the desire of happiness retains its strength to the last. The mind is then disposed to measure the Divine Nature by its perverted conceptions. It wishes to believe in Infinite Benevolence, but is afraid of Infinite Justice. It listens willingly to confident assertions, that the judgment upon evil is contrary to right ideas of the Divine Perfections. On this account, and because modern deism, like many former systems, relies very much on this false notion, it is necessary to speak particularly of the Divine Holiness.

The Infinite Being is holy.

2. Among the most convincing evidences of the Being of God, we have already noticed the facts of man's moral nature. These facts are still more important for their indications of the Divine Character. They discover Him to be holy, and just, and true. The Divine Attribute of Holiness might be inferred from the Unity and Infinity of the Creator. The omnipotent, omniscient Author of all things, cannot be the author of confusion.

[2] "Dieu humainement débonnaire et indulgent." Maleb. Entret. viii. xv.

The perfect harmony of His Nature must give perfect harmony to His works. He is too great to be moved by discordant motives. His creatures, as they proceed from His hand, must therefore be happy in the universal harmony of creation. The Omniscient must be perfectly acquainted with all their needs and desires. He cannot but understand the relations on which their happiness depends. He cannot be influenced by motives inconsistent with the perfection of His works.

The Moral Nature of man will be found to bear evidence to the same truth.

The sense of duty.

3. The Sense of Duty, and the faculty by which the mind is able to direct itself towards what it deems to be right, independently of physical causes or mere intellectual perceptions, have already been noticed as indications of a Creator, Who has made man for some purpose. Whether the judgment in different individuals be right or wrong, whether the feelings be healthy or depraved, the conviction to which all men are liable,—This is what I *ought* to do,—is irrelevant to every scheme of atheism or pantheism. It may often be the conviction of prudence, or utility, or good taste; it may sometimes be dictated by the desire of happiness, or of man's highest dignity; but even in these cases, and in its most ordinary applications,

the mere faculty of choice breaks asunder the atheistic or pantheistic chain of causal succession. If eternal atoms could be conceived to have marshalled themselves into the order of the world, and to have communicated life, and feeling, and movement to the inferior creatures, there would still be a wide chasm between them and man. He alone acts with purpose, and may discover in this faculty the Being of a Creator Who acts with purpose. The atheist may declare all things to be necessitated, and the feeling of power a delusion. But at least it is improbable that natural causes would have given birth to the delusion. The beasts act as the atheist affirms man to act. They are moved by outward causes and sensible impulses. They have no faculty of choice, and are not troubled with the delusion that they have.

But the sense of duty is something more than the faculty of choice. It claims the right of choosing and of directing. It enjoins or forbids. It may be moved by the desire of happiness, or the dignity of humanity, it may accommodate itself to motives of prudence or utility; but the mind has to use an effort against itself, and to repress its natural feelings, before it can be persuaded that there is, in no case, a deeper meaning than any of these, in the conviction that there is something, which it ought to do. It is a judgment implying a

solemn obligation to a Superior. Such is the natural feeling of individuals, and the general decision of mankind.

The sense of duty is an ultimate, unresolvable faculty of the soul. In practice, it is always mixed up with a moral judgment of the understanding, or a moral feeling of the heart, which gives it meaning and application in any particular case; but, of itself, it is something distinct from any judgment, or any feeling of right or wrong. These may vary, and do vary, more or less among mankind. One people may protect their children, another may offer their children in sacrifice; yet both may have the feelings of right and wrong, and may think they are doing what is right. And it is a matter of experience that even when the feeling or judgment is perverted, the mind has a certain satisfaction in doing what it feels it ought, and a certain remorse or fear in neglecting it. The savage may find pleasure in the horrid rites of fiend-worship, though not the pleasure of true piety. He may be distracted with fear, if his accustomed sacrifices have been prohibited. Thus, in his deep degeneracy, he bears testimony to an original disposition of man's constitution, to direct himself according to some Superior Rule or Law. He furnishes an evidence of a Creator superior to man. It is in the *character* of the moral judgments and feelings,

and the natural effects of their action upon the soul, that we find indications of the Character of that Creator.

Man, the work of a holy Creator.

4. The moral constitution of the mind presents many distinct and beautiful indications of the Moral Attributes of Him Who called it into being. This is true, notwithstanding the fallen estate of man. If it were not so,—if utter moral ruin were the universal condition of the race, all religion would be impossible. The invisible things of God would be unseen in creation, and revelation would be a dead letter to minds incapable of discerning between right and wrong. It will be a part of our purpose, in following chapters, to show that the degeneracy of the race has been checked, and its corrupt tendencies restrained by special interpositions of Heaven, and through the great work of the "Saviour of all men." We are now concerned with the fact, that the religious faculty is seldom found to be quite extinct in human nature. As man is fallen, so the ground is accursed. As man is prone to evil, so we find every where in nature the thorn and the thistle, contending with the fruits and flowers of the earth. And yet the Goodness of God is every where manifest in nature, underlying the confusion of evil which covers the surface of the world. In like manner, beneath the corrup-

tion and depravity of man we find, in his natural constitution, indications of the Holiness of God.

But can we separate the work of the Creator from that of the creature,—the original purpose from the perversion? In the case of human workmanship, it is not impossible to distinguish between the intention of an artificer, and the subsequent cause of derangement in his work. "This has been well illustrated," says Dr. Chalmers [3], "by the regulator of a watch, whose office and primary design . . . is to control the velocity of its movements. And we should still perceive this to have been its destination, even though, by accident or decay, it had lost the power of command which at first belonged to it." "By the inspection of the machinery alone we both learn the injury which has been done to it, and the condition in which it originally came from the hand of its maker."

In endeavouring to discern between the work of God and the work of man, it would seem to be an important principle, that *God is the only Creator*. He gave to man the essential powers of his being. He made all things which exist. Man marred his perfect work, but neither man nor finite being could create.

If, then, we could know that human nature pos-

[3] Bridgewater Treatise, chap. i. § 6.

sessed original and incurable propensities to vice; if the mind were so constituted by creation as to delight in strife, and to be happy in producing misery and confusion, this would be an evidence of a malevolent Creator. If we find, on the contrary, that, notwithstanding its derangement and liability to err, it possesses no qualities but such as are capable of their good application; if we discover, besides, that there are plain warnings in man that sin leads to misery; if there be manifest determinations in favour of virtue, even in this fallen world, and a general assent of mankind to the excellence of virtues, which yet they do not practise themselves,—virtues which are essential to civilization, and tend to the harmony both of the individual soul and of the whole race; we have then strong evidence at once of the Wisdom, the Benevolence, and the Holiness of the Creator.

Degenerate tribes.

5. Now it is a matter of universal experience, that the judgments and feelings of mankind, notwithstanding the prevalence of vice, are all but unanimous in favour of virtue. At least, if there be any exceptions to this truth, it is among tribes degraded beneath the brutes, and who have forfeited the right of being enumerated with the human race. The appeal to these tribes, in disproof either of the moral nature of man or of the

moral Character of the Creator, is quite irrelevant. As well might appeal be made to an *individual* who has worn out every good feeling and every good principle by a life of vice. The degraded man or the degenerate tribes, in fact, corroborate the very truths which they were intended to disprove. They show that moral degeneracy leads to the general degradation of human nature. Unless man be evidently degenerate, his judgment is found to approve truth, gratitude, benevolence, and to disapprove the opposite vices; his natural feelings sympathize with suffering, and are offended by injustice, falsehood, and hypocrisy.

These, then, are indications of the Creator's Character. They show us that He loves virtue and hates vice; or, to express the same truth in other words, that the law of His dealings with His creatures tends to the harmony and order of all creation.

Happiness in virtuous acts.

6. It has been already observed that the sense of duty is not an unfeeling imperative, but is attended and followed by complacency or remorse, when its dictates are obeyed or set at defiance. This may be the case, when a man has done what he feels or thinks he ought, though the moral judgment or feeling should be mistaken. But the satisfaction cannot be the same, either in kind or in

degree, with that which attends on conduct regulated by sound principles and a good heart. For, in the first place, it is a truth of moral science, that virtuous affections have a happiness in themselves, and vicious affections a wretchedness, distinct and independent of the moral complacency or remorse which follows them; just as the relish of food is something distinct from the satisfaction of hunger. That envy, malice, hatred, fraud, are in themselves torments to the soul, while there is peace and gladness in honest principles and benevolent feelings, is a truth which needs only to be stated.

But besides this, the consciousness of duty fulfilled necessarily carries with it a far higher pleasure, when the moral judgment is sound, and the affections pure and virtuous. Truth is always more agreeable to the mind than error, as light is more pleasant to the eyes than darkness. In fact, a sound judgment is a source of pleasure in the conduct of life, as it is in any intellectual pursuit; good affections bring their own gladness; and both the emotional and the intellectual gratification combine, in the pure and noble happiness of the mind which feels it has fulfilled its duty, and sees that it has followed the direction of its highest destiny.

Happiness of habitual virtue.

7. And farther: besides the happiness of particular virtuous actions, there is a still higher happiness in habitual virtue. Besides the relish of taste, and the gratification of satisfied hunger, there is a constant enjoyment in the possession of good health and a sound constitution. This, it has been said, forms a great part of the happiness of the brute creation. In like manner, besides the inherent pleasure of virtuous affections, and of a good conscience, in acts of duty or of generosity; there is a deep and lasting happiness in the healthy spirit of a well-ordered and virtuous soul, which attains its highest and fullest realization in "the peace of God which passeth knowledge." In this constant happiness of a sound spiritual nature, man has one of the most convincing proofs that the Living God is with him, and the clearest indications of the Divine Character. It is here especially that he feels and knows himself to be in close relation with the Infinite.

Depth of the moral feelings.

8. And most men know something of the depth of such a feeling. Most men, if they will reflect and look thoughtfully within themselves, may perceive that there is something in the feeling of duty, deeper than strikes them at first sight,—something deeper than any consideration of happiness or general utility. The sense or

feeling that benevolence *is due* to others, and ought to be felt and shown, is something more than the complacency of a benevolent disposition. This virtue is delightful in itself. A man is beneath his nature, who has no pleasure in alleviating the sufferings, or increasing the happiness of others. But there is something deeper than this in the moral nature,—something which seems to go beyond it, as the Infinite exceeds the finite.

Men may quell the feeling and forget it; but none have always been free from that remorse, which is felt to contain something more awful than can be accounted for. When a man considers attentively the feeling which prompts him to a good action, when he calls himself to search its origin, and to reflect upon its significancy, when he observes the effects of moral goodness upon his nature, it seems as though he looked into an unsearchable depth within his soul.

The feeling of self-reproach and self-abhorrence for selfish and wicked deeds, has in it something of the same awful character. It is a feeling which years of vice and contempt of God cannot wear away. Sudden fears and compunctions will sometimes pierce the thickest covering of sin, and shoot forth unbidden through the ruins of the moral constitution. The contempt of self, so common to confirmed vice, the wretchedness of

the strife and confusion which fill the soul, the abhorrence of the very dispositions to which it is enslaved, are irrefragable testimonies to the Character of the soul's Creator. These were the feelings, too well known, which harassed the debased spirit, and lacerated the guilty conscience of Tiberius, when he indited his memorable letter to the Roman senate. "His villanies and crimes," says the historian, "had turned to his own punishment. So truly was it affirmed by the most illustrious of wise men, that if the minds of tyrants were laid open, they would be seen marked with contusions and wounds; since, as the body by stripes, so the soul is torn by cruelty, lust, evil counsels: insomuch that neither his high estate, nor his habitual seclusion could protect Tiberius from the confession of his inward torments, and self-inflicted punishments[4]."

Conscience.

9. In the foregoing observations, the soul has been considered capable of virtuous or vicious affections. To speak in logical order, it must be said that man is capable of opposite affections, some of which are found, in proportion as they are

[4] Tacitus (Ann. vi. 6) quotes from Socrates, Ὁ τῷ ὄντι τύραννος τῷ ὄντι δοῦλος . . . ἐάν τις ὅλην ψυχὴν ἐπίστηται θεάσασθαι, καὶ φόβου γέμων διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου, σφαδασμῶν τε καὶ ὀδυνῶν πλήρης. Plato, Rep., ix. p. 579.

cherished, to be attended by happy emotions, to advance his general well-being, and to secure the harmony of his nature. Virtuous conduct may then be defined, to be that which tends to the harmony of the soul. Not that this, or any definition, can furnish a rule of practice. Nor is there any feeling or faculty in man, which gives a universal criterion of the difference between right and wrong. He is subject to various and conflicting emotions. Vicious propensities may have an unhealthy predominance. Even virtuous dispositions may be misapplied. Ill-judged benevolence may be pernicious to society. The virtuous hatred of vice and fraud may be pressed beyond its bounds, and may trespass upon the duties of charity. Indeed some moralists maintain revenge to be a healthful feeling, overlooking the truth that man can never know his brother to be incorrigible, and therefore ought to distinguish between him and his crimes.

That there is no universal criterion of morality, and no infallible moral guide of human nature, is evident from the frequent difficulty of correct moral judgment. Thus, they who would abolish capital punishments argue that no malefactor is utterly depraved. The perpetrator of a great crime may have within him a spring of goodness which has never been opened out. Society ought

therefore to aim at correction, but can have no right to be vindictive. On the other hand, it may be argued, that the duty of society to the individual is overruled by consideration for the whole body. Or a third party may maintain that the Divine prerogative of vengeance has, in one case, and one only, been conferred on society, by special revelation. Such instances make it evident that man has in himself no infallible criterion of right and wrong, and can have none, not even from revelation, because what is infallible in itself, becomes fallible in his interpretation of it. His moral nature directs him to a perfect law; but he can learn his duty, only as he can become acquainted with truth, or succeed in any pursuit of life,—by means of thought, experience, and attention. His guide is the faculty of reason, which examines the nature of the moral feelings, and considers their tendency, and, by the force of its approbation or disapprobation, is able to modify and to direct them. Conscience then is the reflex action of the reason, upon the moral feelings and judgments of right and wrong. It is compounded of several distinct original faculties of the mind; but, as we have observed in the intellectual processes of thought and perception, they unite in one simple indivisible energy.

10. But though man has no perfect law within himself, yet experience shows that the very same course of conduct, which brings along with it the best and noblest happiness of which he is capable, is that which tends also to the soul's health and dignity; and is, besides, that which, as far as human judgment can reach, conduces to the common welfare of society, and the general improvement of the human race; while, on the contrary, the affections which are miserable in their action, leave their pernicious effects behind them in the spirit, are fraught with confusion to mankind, and, unless their malignant influence be restrained, ensure the degradation of the race to the lowest depths of savage life.

These, then, are evidences in man's moral constitution of the truth discoverable by reason alone. They show that the perfect moral law may be defined to be the law of universal order. "Order is heaven's first law." This was a wise saying, and contains a fundamental truth. The perfect law tends to the order of the universe, in the unity of all the creatures with one another, and with the Creator. Universal order is possible, though no soul of man, but One only, and He Divine, has been perfectly conformed to the Will of God. As reason led us to conceive that the works of the Creator must be perfectly adapted to one another,

or perfectly adjusted to their position in the universal frame; so conscience gives us independent intimations of an eternal and universal law of right. Reason interprets this intimation of a moral law, and identifies it with its own anticipation of a law of order.

The particular applications of the law of right must depend upon the natural constitution of created beings, and their relations to one another and to the Creator. But as all things are originated by the Deity, as all the powers of nature and of living beings are derived from Him, so it may be said that the law of their order has its ultimate foundation in the Divine Nature. Perfect goodness is perfect consistency with the Divine Will. It is the entire union and agreement of the finite creature with the Infinite Creator. It is order and harmony in the universe. Evil, or falsehood, is the confusion of creation, the breaking of its harmony, the opposition of the derived to the Underived.

Origin of the moral feelings.

11. Thus the constitution of man's nature furnishes, in the *results* and *tendencies* of his moral agency, as far as they can be followed, evidences of the Being and Holiness of the Creator. Similar indications may be traced in the *origin* of the moral feelings, so far as they can be followed

backward to their source. The benevolent affections rest on sympathy, which is an original mental principle. The infant will sympathize with pain long before it can speak. The sympathy of laughter is almost universal. Is there not in this principle, and in the affections which naturally arise from it, an intimation that man was intended to live in society, and originally endowed with a disposition to love his neighbour? And may we not find the remnants of an original love of God, in the strong feeling of right, and the natural hatred of falsehood and injustice? For to love the universal order is to love God. There is nothing selfish in these feelings. Benevolence may be attended by happiness, but happiness is incidental to it, not its aim. And the love of justice is as strong for another as for oneself. It can only become stronger for oneself, when it is mixed up with a wholly different feeling. The incidental pleasure of the moral feelings, and their general tendency to gladden the spirit and to ennoble it, show that their right exercise is in accordance with the intentions of the Creator.

Perversion of the faculties.

12. In its moral nature then, as in its intellectual nature, the soul comes into being possessed of certain original tendencies and capacities, which give rise, in its primary experience, to derived and

compound faculties. These are apprehended in all experience as simple energies. No faculty is of man's own creating. All bear testimony to the Character of Him Who implanted them. There is none without its proper object and its right use. Human power may misapply, and pervert, and wear out the original dispositions. But having done this, it cannot call them back at will. It may give them their direction, but it cannot hinder the results. And they may be seen, even in their perversion, to have been such as would have maintained the free agent in the sphere of universal order. The good feelings may be weak. They may be overborne by the desire of pleasure. For the mind is wont to transfer its energies from the proper ends of its faculties, to the pleasures which nature has made incidental to them; as the miser transfers his love from the goods, for which money is valuable, to the money itself. But man possesses a faculty, by which he can approximate nearer to the course of duty, and give strength to the good dispositions. The weakness of these dispositions, the feebleness of the faculty which ought to be supreme, the fickleness and instability of the will, are indications that he is not as he was created. The dimness of the moral sight shows the need of Divine Guidance; the weakness of moral resolution the want of Divine Assistance.

13. But the condition of man, as he is, affords indications of the purpose of life, which farther illustrate the Divine Conduct and Character. If life be intended for any great or useful purpose, if man have any known work to do, any discoverable duties to fulfil, they are to be found in his moral trial and improvement. The constitution of human nature and the experience of life, contain many evidences that we are placed here for this especial purpose, that we may be established in virtue by probation; and, by gaining moral strength and firm habits of goodness, may be prepared for the possession and enjoyment of a better life to come.

One indication of this purpose of life deserves a more particular attention. The comparison of the sensational and the moral powers in their course of growth and development, and of the pleasures attending their exercise, affords a strong presumption, that, as the one attain their end in this life, the other point to something beyond the present. The right employment of the sensational and physical powers appears, like that of the moral powers, to be attended with pleasure till their growth has been perfected, and their use fully attained. This source of pleasure, by which the mind is drawn into its intercourse with the world, and attains the use of its senses and other faculties,

has been noticed in the former part. It is mentioned by Dr. Paley[5] as an instance of the Divine Goodness. "The young of all animals," he says, "appear to me to receive pleasure simply from the exercise of their limbs and bodily faculties, without reference to any end to be attained, or any use to be answered by their exertion. A child is delighted with speaking without having any thing to say, and with walking without knowing where to go. And prior to both these, I am disposed to believe, that the waking hours of infancy are agreeably taken up with the exercise of vision, or perhaps, more properly speaking, with learning to see." This pleasure is similar to that which attends the development of the moral powers. But while the former belongs only to the young, and ceases when they have attained the use of their faculties, the moral complacency, on the contrary, is, to the end of life, one of the best enjoyments of the good man.

This then is an indication that, as childhood is the time for maturing the powers, which are to find their full employment in life; so the whole of life is the childhood of the moral nature, and is preparatory to a state of perfection beyond the grave. The powers of the body attain their

[5] Nat. Theol. c. xxvi.

maturity in this life; the moral powers are always imperfect, but always capable of improvement. It is probable that as those are so essential to the preservation of life in the present state, so these cannot be neglected with impunity to the soul, in the life to come[6].

The starry heaven, and the moral law.

14. Thus, in the innumerable adjustments of the external universe, we have found the most remarkable evidences of the Divine Wisdom; in the moral constitution of man, evidences no less striking of His Holiness. "Two things there are," said Kant, "which, the oftener and the more stedfastly we consider, fill the mind with an ever new, an ever rising admiration and reverence;—*the* STARRY HEAVEN *above*, *the* MORAL LAW *within*[7]." May not the thought suggest the comparison of the perfect order of the works of God, with the disorder which is wrought when His works can be perverted by the will of man? Should not the view of the stability and harmony of the creation, awaken the energies, and direct the faculties, by which the finite may be brought within the universal order of the Infinite? And if confusion

[6] On the growth of moral habits, see Butler's Analogy, chap. v.; Chalmers' Bridgewater Treatise, chap. iii.

[7] Sir W. Hamilton's Translation, Discussions, 2nd ed. p. 310. The nineteenth Psalm contains the same thought.

prevail in human life, should not the immensity of the harmonious universe restrain the sceptical imagination, that the strife which reigns in this little world of man, can be any disparagement of the Infinite Perfections of the Creator? And may not this truth hold good, though the moral law within the soul should be as permanent in its action, as enduring in its effects, as the laws of the starry universe above?

CHAPTER V.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

Is goodness Infinite?

1. The manifestations of the Divine Wisdom and Holiness in nature and in man, are, at the same time, manifestations of the Divine Benevolence. It has been evident in the view of nature, that the creation has been ordered with regard to the well-being and happiness of the creatures. But the Goodness of the Creator is not simple Benevolence. That it does not imply the absolute prohibition of pain, nor the determination of things to give unconditional enjoyment to every individual, is an obvious truth. And it is equally true that, so far as experience goes, the means of enjoyment bear no proportion to the merits of individuals.

It becomes then the most interesting and momentous of all questions concerning the Supreme Being;—can it be known, notwithstanding the

manifold ills of life, that He is Infinitely Good? And what signification are we to attach to the conception of Infinite Goodness? The Creator has provided with marvellous Wisdom for the well-being of man; but the course of nature appears to be bound in rigorous laws, which often seem to give secure enjoyment to the vicious, and to find their victims among the virtuous. Can we know, notwithstanding, that Infinite Love is over all, and that even the dispensation of sufferings is governed by Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, not only to the universal system, but to every soul? Does the Ordainer of nature's laws regard us individually and with affection? The Wisdom of creation may well convince us that He has not made man for nought, nor for the present life alone. Can we trust then to Infinite Holiness and Love for the life hereafter? Thousands of conditions combine, to ward off innumerable ills in this system to which we belong. They give us, in general, a large measure of enjoyment. But time is no more than an instant before eternity. Who then would prefer to have all he may desire in the present, rather than to find the life beyond death adapted to the nature of the soul? I may be delighted by the splendours of the firmament, or the beauties of the earth; but who would not see the sky to be as brass, and the rain of the land as

powder and dust, rather than lose the hope of a happy immortality? I may have faculties for the attainment of truth, and may find pleasure in the pursuit; but who would not choose to live in ignorance of every thing, rather than be ignorant that God is Good?

Expectation of reason.

2. Reason will anticipate that the Infinite Wisdom of the Creator will extend to include Infinite Goodness within its agency. His Wisdom is manifested in the relations and adjustments of the insentient parts of creation: His Goodness in similar adaptations, when viewed as including the capacities of happiness and enjoyment, which are the endowments of living creatures. The mind naturally anticipates that a Being so wise and powerful cannot be otherwise than good. It is impossible that One so great, can be subject to the transient motives and selfish purposes which influence the conduct of man. The mind is disposed to believe that the perfect order of the works of God, will extend to the harmony between the feelings and desires of living souls, and the outward world which environs them.

Evils of life.

3. But it is evident that reason, if left to itself, is apt to draw a conclusion at variance with manifest facts. It often seeks to extend the Perfection

and Immutability of the Creator, to the imperfect and mutable creature. We shall have occasion to notice instances, in which arguments from conceptions of the Infinite Being give conclusions at variance with common experience. A theorist, who overlooks the facts of life, may easily hasten to the conclusion that the works of the All-wise, Almighty Being, must be in perfect harmony among themselves. He will expect the creation to be perfect, and happiness unfailing. But when he takes account of the sin and suffering which abound, he will often find his conceptions to be rudely shaken, and may be perplexed to reconcile the truth of Infinite Goodness with the many ills of life.

For who does not know that nature has its dark clouds, as well as its sunshine? Who has not felt for others, at least, in the troubles of life, though he have been free from them himself? The philosopher in his closet, and at his ease, may indolently think of God as universally and infinitely benevolent; but he is more wrapped up in self-complacency than he ought to be, if he can pass without to the thronged lanes and unwholesome alleys of the town, and can see and hear the squalor, the disease, the hunger, the blasphemy, the reckless denial of the Almighty, and can find it easy, by the light of reason and nature alone, to repress

the question which will force itself to the lips,— 'Are these the works of the All-perfect God?' It may be true that the sound and healthy mind may find enough in man and nature to repress all doubt of the Divine Goodness. But the experience of life and history has shown that, in seasons of extreme suffering, something more is wanted than natural religion, to preserve the mind in its equilibrium.

What becomes of the conception of Infinite Goodness, if it have nothing beyond natural religion for its support, when hundreds are struck down around us by that Asiatic scourge which has carried off half the population of towns abroad, and fallen again, with its former malignity, upon our own country? Feelings are chilled, and reasonings powerless to convince, when our neighbours sink in death almost before our eyes, and are hurriedly buried out of sight. Man needs something more than philosophy to support him in the time of a pestilence yet more virulent, which is said of late to have ravaged a great town[1] of a kindred country, and plunged the inhabitants in that recklessness of extreme calamity, which is powerfully described in the language of an ancient historian[2]. It is often beyond any mere power of

[1] New Orleans.

[2] Thucydides, Book ii.

man, when he sees the manifold sufferings and sorrows, and still more the wrongs of life,—the oppression of virtue, the outrage of innocence, the cruel villany of brother to brother, the hypocrisy of self-righteousness, the odious tyranny of a miscreant;—it is beyond the power of man to separate good from evil, the Creator's work from the creature's, to know that all good is of God, all evil contrary to God.

Perversions of Christianity.

4. And in these days, the difficulty assumes its most aggravated form. Formerly, it was the impious denier of the Almighty, who reproached the faithful with the question, 'Where is thy God?' But now, it is under the cloak of religion, and in the name of the Most Holy, that the worst crimes are perpetrated and defended. In one Christian country, the slave-driver quotes Scripture for his inhuman craft, and pulpits re-echo his defence. In another, the most sacred of trusts is sold for money, or political influence, or family aggrandizement, and the good points of a living are described as minutely as those of a negro slave, the souls as little regarded in either case. And yet, with their slave auction lists and their Ecclesiastical Gazettes before their eyes, Protestants will be looking to Rome for the traffic in "bodies and souls of

men[3]"! Or if we look to the East, we read of imperial covetousness and ambition, ill disguised by imperial falsehood and hypocrisy, and find the honour and truthfulness in the insulted Turk, which have departed from the "Head of the Holy Eastern Church." When a powerful Christian monarch will stoop to the lowest intrigue to effect his ends, and is ready to deluge the earth with the blood of thousands who may stand in the way of his ambition, while he deceives his ignorant subjects with the worn-out idea of fighting for the sepulchre of the Saviour, and defending the true faith, many will be unable to repress the question,—'Is this world, with all it contains, indeed the work of the All-holy, Almighty God?'

The successful wrongs of life have often persuaded the theorist that his lofty speculations were delusive, the highest inferences of his reason inconsistent with palpable facts. Mankind have therefore constantly fallen back from the highest theology of reason to the finite gods, the unholy dæmons of heathendom. Or they have believed in a God infinitely great, but not infinitely good. The gods of human imagining have too often been the very reverse in character to the God of Truth. Weak and passionate, like man himself, cruel, lustful,

[3] *σωμάτων καὶ ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων.* Rev. xviii. 13.

envious of the happy, they needed to be appeased by frightful atrocities and hideous human sacrifices. For its assurance that the Supreme Being is Perfect Goodness, natural religion has been much indebted to a volume, which professes to contain a revelation from Himself.

Sceptical objections.

5. Yet, strange to say, it is against the Character of God, as discovered to us in this very Book, that our modern sceptics are directing their most determined hostility. It is attempted, by writers of various shades of opinion, to supersede Christianity with a scheme of unbelief which would degrade the Bible to the level of a work of man, and affirms its principal truths to be inconsistent with the Divine Wisdom and Goodness. It is proposed to us as the subject of this Essay, to consider the evidence that there is a Supreme Being of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, and especially to answer objections to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness. With these advocates of modern infidelity before us, concurring, as we shall find, in support of one great antichristian system, which is maintained by some of them with avowed atheism, by others with the pretence of a pure theism, more reasonable and consistent, they affirm, than that of revelation; there can be little question as to how we may fulfil the pious intention,

which, eighty years ago, dictated the above request.

Constancy of the Divine Benevolence.

6. The Benevolence of the Creator is every where manifest in the universe, both in the arrangements of nature, and in the constitution of living beings. It every where underlies the confusion, with which the sin of man has overspread the surface of human life. Beneath the varied troubles and the shifting turbulence of evil, the laws of harmony and order remain unchangeable. It is but the surface of the ocean, and but a little portion of the surface, that can be seen at once; and, while the clouds and storms sweep over it, and darkness covers its face, we may imagine it to be in commotion through all its depths. But beneath the varying tempests, and the fitful agitations of the surface, the great deep remains ever the same. So is the Goodness of God, beneath the evils of life. These are constantly changing and shifting their forms. New blights, new pestilences, are continually rising in the place of old. Pests hitherto unknown attack the fruits of the ground: new and strange diseases lie in wait for the lives of men. Plague and small-pox are checked by human improvements and ingenuity, and malignant cholera springs up to do their work.

But God is Unchangeable, and the laws of His universe are abiding. No derangement can be permanent: no ills can establish their dominion over the course of nature. The thorn and the thistle may overrun the fields of the sluggard; the tempest may sometimes carry desolation to the most diligent; or, on the other hand, man may increase and improve the productions of nature by attention and ingenuity: but the laws of nature on which he depends retain their constancy from age to age. The gifts of a munificent Providence are shed forth in abundance from year to year. Famine is the exception, and does not overpower the rule.

The bodily frame of man, so fearfully and wonderfully made, is subject to varied and numerous disorders. Ten thousand arrangements and adjustments must combine within and around us; ten thousand forces must be exactly balanced, to maintain happiness and even life for a single moment. It is the exception, not the rule, when one arrangement falls into disorder. It is the exception, when a single force of so many runs into deficiency or excess, and gives rise to internal derangement of the system, or pollutes without us the breath of life.

Gratuitous pleasures of nature.

7. The means of happiness in all the faculties

of human nature, whether of sense, of intellect, or of emotion, remain unchanged in every age. One of the most remarkable proofs of the Divine Benevolence, is to be found in the enjoyments which attend the temperate use of all the faculties, mental as well as bodily. The gratuitous pleasure superadded to animal sensations has been instanced by Dr. Paley[4]. Attention to the conditions of life and health might have been made compulsory by an economy of pain. Hunger would compel a man to his food, without the gratifications of relish. The same observation applies to the mental faculties. The necessities of subsistence might furnish a sufficient incentive to intellectual exertion, without the pleasures which attend it. The fear of punishment, immediate judgment upon wickedness, might enforce the moral obligations, without the superadded happiness of a good conscience. The conjunction of pleasure with the right exercise of all the powers, is, in fact, a general law of creation, and is a striking proof of the Benevolence of the Creator.

Evil, never a natural contrivance.

8. The general Goodness of God cannot reasonably be questioned. His agency secures the well-

[4] Nat. Theol. chap. xxvi.

being and happiness of man and the lower creatures by innumerable provisions. "The air, the earth, the water, teem with delighted existence." And man possesses more enjoyment in his daily life than he is thankful for, and more means of enjoyment than he puts in action. It is also an important observation, that of the many evils to which all creatures are liable, it cannot fairly be affirmed of one that it is the result of creative design. Benevolent designs are endless: evils are incidental and exceptional. They do not spring from the permanent arrangements or essential properties of things. This truth is well illustrated by Paley. "A sickle is not made to cut the reaper's hand, though from the construction of the instrument and the manner of using it, this mischief often follows." But in an instrument of torture, "pain and misery are the very objects of contrivance. Now nothing of the sort is to be found in the works of nature." On this head it may suffice to refer to Paley's admirable chapter.

Often tends to good.

9. It is not less true that things confessedly evil, tend continually to beneficial results. Whatever causes may have brought the human constitution to be what it is,—whatever account be given of its degeneracy,—it needs no proof nor

illustration to show that man, as he now is, gains innumerable advantages from that economy of the world, which admits suffering and pain. He is little acquainted with himself, who sighs for a life of undisturbed ease and enjoyment, or imagines that such a condition would be one of happiness. If all pleasures were as common as the air, they would be as little enjoyed and as little noticed. The moral improvement of the race, as well as of individuals, is effected, in a large measure, through suffering and sorrow. Nay, they are a mainspring of that exertion, and that exercise of all the faculties, which are necessary to rescue man from the wretchedness of indolence, and to engage him in the various pursuits, which are the chief means of happiness. He needs the incentives of suffering to awaken him to life; the pleasures of activity are superadded.

Sufferings of mankind.

10. Thus far then on the general agency of the Divine Goodness. But it must be admitted that when we pass from the general course and constitution of things to the condition of individuals; still more, when we look at the actual state of large portions of the race, we meet with difficulties which some minds cannot reconcile with Infinite Goodness. Granted, it may be said, that

the laws of nature aim at beneficent ends, yet they have frequent and terrible exceptions. A plague may not alter the universal laws, but it may desolate a country, and the bereaved and dying are not consoled by the assurance that its ravages will cease. The storm will be stilled, and the raging sea will be calm; but not till many brave hearts, and many loving hearts shall have ceased to beat. The earth may in general bring forth abundantly; but the orphans may have been defrauded of their competency, and the widow may see them in want of bread. Bodily disorder may be the exception; but some can part from suffering only with life, and bear, perhaps, the sins of their fathers, who suffered little for themselves. Air, earth, and sea may teem with happy life; but large towns teem with profligacy and wretchedness; continents teem with barbarism, and the cry of their atrocities ascends continually to heaven.

Can it be said, in spite of all, that God is Infinitely Good? Can it be known that He is not merely the Ordainer of general laws, which aim at beneficence, but are perpetually frustrated, or ensure happiness to some favoured portions of the race, only by making victims of the rest;—but that He cares for every one individually,—that His love is upon all His creatures? Must not Infinite Power

and Goodness secure the happiness of all, by laws unfailing as well as universal?

Often exaggerated.

11. In answer to these questions it must be observed, in the first place, that their force is often greatly exaggerated. Men are apt to judge of the happiness of others, by comparing their condition with their own. Nothing can be more fallacious. In fact, there is no more striking evidence of the Divine Benevolence, than in the ability of the mind, not only to struggle, with elastic power, against the feeling of adversity, but also to adapt itself to wide varieties of circumstances. One in ease and affluence may think the humblest stations to be unhappy. But they are capable of the same gladness, sometimes of a higher happiness than his own. This remark will apply even to savage life. We need not sigh for it, with Rousseau, nor be ungrateful for the blessings of civilization; but may easily believe the state of barbarism to be capable of far more enjoyments, than, from our dependence on civilization, we might expect. In every condition of life, the heaviest afflictions, the most intolerable wretchedness, are not those of circumstances, but what a man makes for himself. Insufferable misfortunes, heartrending bereavements are rare, in comparison of self-wrought miseries. The most wretched of mankind are

they who have possessed abundant means of happiness, but, through recklessness, or vice, or neglect, have rendered themselves incapable of enjoying them.

Infinite Goodness must extend to all.

12. It must be admitted, however, that we do not thus touch the root of the difficulty. We can but curtail its thick branches, and lessen the dark shadow they cast upon the sunshine of nature. Many are heavily afflicted, and for their life-time, sometimes through what appear to be accidental failures of the general laws of nature, often through the faults of others. Some effort of thought is necessary to imagine their position in life, and to view the question of Divine Goodness, as it must appear to them. At first sight they may think themselves the victims of general laws, who suffer that others may be happy. The laws of nature are rigorous and unpitying. No calamity can interrupt them; no suffering can make them pause. There were an end of the doctrine of Infinite Goodness, if this were all that could be said. Infinite Wisdom may work by general laws, and, though there should be much waste in nature, may be conceived to accomplish its ends. The minute seeds of the ground, the stupendous globes of the sky may, many of them, be superabundant productions of general laws. They may be imagined to

be sparks from the anvil of creation, or shards from the footsteps of the Creator, and many minds will think it no disparagement to Infinite Wisdom. But Goodness cannot be conceived to be Infinite, unless it reach to individuals, and to all. It may work by general laws; but if the laws be unequal in their results, there must be an affectionate purpose superior to them. Can one know then, in severe affliction, that there is? Can one know that nothing happens to himself, beside the purpose of Infinite Goodness? Is there truth in the consolation that he is called to suffer, though his suffering be the result of general laws?

At least he has no reason to think otherwise. There is no opposition between laws of nature and a particular providence of Goodness. The origin and the continued causes of the laws, are equally beyond the reach of knowledge. Every event of general laws may be as much determined by the Divine Will, as if it stood alone. And natural religion may find a purpose in afflictions, though often uncertain, till it is supported by the assurances of revelation. The highest forms of virtue, —mental energy in bodily weakness, patience, fortitude, trust in God, are nurtured in suffering. It may be seen on the face of things, that man is not made only to be happy, but that holiness is before

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happiness, in the purpose of life. No higher privilege, or nobler destiny is allotted to man, than to be made perfect by suffering, to overrule evil for good. If the manifestations of Divine Power and Wisdom in nature, should not convince him that the Disposer of nature is too great, to allow any one of His creatures to be afflicted without good purpose; yet, by the revelation of the Divine Holiness in his own moral constitution, he may be assured that his sufferings will be explained, his patience rewarded, and the inequalities of the present redressed in a longer futurity. In the noble qualities which the soul acquires through affliction, it has an instinctive feeling that as it has been fitted for a better life, and advances in its preparation till the time of its departure from the world, so that better life will be given it, which it is calculated to fill. Such a spirit has often been found happy in afflictions, and has exulted under the prolonged agonies of a death of torture.

Moral evils.

13. But in considering the physical evils of mankind, are we not precluding the vindication of the Divine Goodness in view of the moral evils which abound? For in these, as well as in the former, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. Vicious propensities are transmitted in

the blood, as well as bodily disorders. And how many are shut up in vice, or find the escape from it far more difficult than it is to others, through penury, or ignorance, or the force of example and habit. This is true of multitudes in this Christian land, much more of the millions of heathendom, who have sunk in degeneracy, through the vices of past generations.

Is there then, notwithstanding this worst phase of human misery,—worst in reality, though not what may be felt the most by its victims,—is there still Infinite Goodness over all? There is still no evidence to the contrary, not even in the moral evils of life. That mankind suffer morally as well as physically through the sins of others, is a part of the constitution of things, for which it may be difficult to assign a sufficient reason. But we cannot know that no such reason exists. There would appear to be a Great Purpose of the Almighty in the existence of the human race, as well as a subordinate purpose in that of individuals. And the greater purpose need not interfere with a single instance of the less. Infinite Holiness and Love may still extend to every man. That creatures may be morally accountable, it is not necessary that they should possess equal endowments and opportunities, but that each be responsible in his measure. When the mind is overborne by the view

of evils, it may be difficult to maintain the assurance of Infinite Goodness. But natural religion is not without its clue to the truth, though the light of revelation may be necessary for its full discovery. If the vastness and the stupendous powers of nature do not satisfy the mind, that the Maker of all things is too great and too wise, to be without a good purpose in the life of every individual; at least they make it certain, that He knows the abilities of every man, in all his natural endowments, and under all the circumstances which surround him. He can take account of all the difficulties of life, can discern what is necessitated from what is wilful, can estimate every action with perfect judgment. It is no less certain, from the discovery of His Character in the moral nature of man, that He will deal equitably with all. He may impart the gifts of life in different degrees, but He will provide the means of happiness for every creature. The human family is bound in the ties of consanguinity, and the consequent fellowship of sin and suffering; but the moral evils of the race give the occasions of probation to individuals; and, if all be not capable of the same advancement, all have some talent which they may improve, and all will be responsible in their measure. The preparatory life may be imperfect; vice and degradation may be allowed, for wise reasons,

to run their course; but the Sense of Right in the soul is an assurance from Him Who implanted it, that none can ultimately fail to be happy through any defect in the constitution of things, or any failure of general laws. Whatever may be the fruit of wilfulness, none will be the victims of an imperfect nature, nor of the overpowering force of circumstances.

Origin of evil.

14. Such considerations may satisfy reason. Scepticism cannot so easily be silenced. It will carry us yet farther back, and enforce the consideration of a prior question. Granted, it may be said, that a life of ease is not suitable to man as he is; granted that suffering works out good ends, and the highest virtues are seldom reared in prosperity; yet might not man have possessed, in his original constitution, the highest excellence of which his nature is capable; and might not the outward creation have ministered to his perfect happiness? And must not the failure and imperfection of nature, in both respects, disprove either the Infinite Power or the Infinite Goodness of the Creator? The objection becomes still more urgent when the righteous judgment to come is understood to be a judgment of condemnation to many. We are thus brought to a very old question,—that of the Origin of Evil. We shall find in the theo-

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ries of modern scepticism and speculation, that its repeated discussion in times past, has not obviated the necessity of giving it a place in the present undertaking.

CHAPTER VI.

EVIL NOT CHARGEABLE UPON THE CREATOR.

The question cannot be evaded.

1. To consider the origin and existence of evil, in the universe of an Infinitely Powerful, Wise, and Good Creator, is to enter upon a question which practical men have long considered an unmanageable and fruitless speculation. But it is an inquiry which will be forced upon us, however we may seek to evade it. No question is more fruitful in the objections of scepticism; there is none on which it is more necessary to have definite opinions, before we can meet the difficulties, or decline the unwarrantable assumptions of anti-christian writers.

It is true the question has been repeatedly discussed, from the earliest age of thought, both by heathens and by Christians, who may have long since said all that can be said upon it. But their most evident conclusions have hitherto had little

effect on the general mind of the world; and it may be questioned, whether the current speculations of recent times have been as satisfactory as some which went before them.

When the subject is stated generally, it is sure to be the popular decision that it is beyond our reach; and, if men always acquiesced in this conclusion, there would be little necessity for the present chapter. But the readers of modern sceptical works will not hastily assume that it should be set aside without inquiry. It will appear from a recent work of Mr. Theodore Parker's, that men are apt to be influenced by dogmatic assertions, involving decisions on the very questions, which, if they had been nakedly proposed, would at once have been dismissed as impracticable.

False assumptions.

2. If it be the great business of human life to know and to reverence the Almighty, there must be something wofully defective in the state of education, where men can listen with admiration to assertions common with Mr. Parker;—that "Revelation attributes to the Deity dark and malignant conduct which it is dreadful to think of," namely, in the discovery of His Judgments upon sin; that "since the devil is the work of God, all the evil which is in the devil must have originated with God, . . . and therefore the character of absolute

evil, which is in the devil, must have been . . ." with a multitude of similar assertions on the "Popular Theology," in the quotation of which it will often be necessary to stop short.

All these opinions, and the whole of his vehement opposition to the revealed doctrines of the Divine Conduct and Character, rest upon an assumed theory of the origin, the existence, and the destiny of evil. This theory is not explicitly enunciated, but it underlies all his writings. It is begged in all those audacious assertions, which easily gain the attention of the half-learned, simply because they are audacious; and become still more mischievous when they fall in with the disposition, so natural to man, to separate God's Goodness from His Judgments,—to think he may do as he will, and "shall not surely die." When the heart is captivated by such figments, the head easily forgets to see how weak they are.

No invincible objections to truth.

3. The Christian theist will not be content to receive these opinions, however strongly expressed, as the legitimate conclusions of reason upon the doctrines of revelation. He is sure that man can never find himself in a dilemma between renouncing reason or revelation. Both are Divine gifts. There is a voice of God in both: and the voice of God is always consistent with itself.

If this be true, it must be possible to see the fallacy of such assertions as we have quoted. Human faculties are incompetent to judge of the whole truth of the Most High; but they are able to criticise their own assumptions. If they cannot always demonstrate the dogmas of infidelity to be the exact opposite of the truth, they can always show them to be unwarranted[1]. Reason may destroy their influence, by showing that they reach beyond the sphere of knowledge. It cannot know all things, but it may approximate to the limits of the knowable, and may require others to confine themselves within these limits. Granted that these are subjects on which we soon arrive at the confines of knowledge,—granted that the depths of being are unfathomable, and the line of our understanding but very short; yet, though we cannot sound the abyss of mystery, we may have a good idea of the length of our line. And nothing can be more important in the philosophy of religion, than to guard against the dangers of scepticism, by indicating the limits of the comprehensible.

It will be the aim of the following Book, to point out the unreasonable character of recent attacks upon revealed doctrines, and to bring to light the

[1] "Pour moi, j'avoue que je ne saurois être du sentiment de ceux qui soutiennent qu'une vérité peut souffrir des objections invincibles." Leibnitz, Théodicée, Discours, &c., 25.

theory of Evil implied, though not enunciated; that we may view it face to face with the just conclusions of reason, and the declarations of Holy Writ. We shall find that modern schemes of infidelity are, in fact, old systems long since disposed of, and appearing in a new disguise. Error is ever changing its motley garb. Drive it from one post which it has proclaimed impregnable, and it soon appears, with no less confidence, in another.

Bayle's dogma on evil.

4. The question of the origin of evil is closely related to our knowledge on all the Attributes of the Almighty, but especially His Power and Goodness. It has often been stated, after a heathen sceptic, as a dilemma between limited Power and limited Goodness in the Creator [2].

Many and various solutions of the difficulty have been proposed. Numerous attempts have been made to answer the demand,—Whence the exist-

[2] Lactantius (de Ira Dei, cap. xiii.) has, "Deus, inquit Epicurus, aut vult tollere mala, et non potest; aut potest, et non vult; aut neque vult, neque potest; aut et vult, et potest. Si vult et non potest, imbecillis est, quod in Deum non redit; si potest et non vult, invidus, quod æque alienum a Deo; si neque vult neque potest, et invidus et imbecillis, ideoque neque Deus. Si vult et potest, quod solum Deo convenit, unde ergo sunt mala, aut cur illa non tollit?" The answer of Lactantius is to the effect,—"Si tollantur mala, tolli pariter sapientiam, nec ulla in homine virtutis remanere vestigia. . . . Constat igitur omnia propter hominem proposita, tam mala, quam etiam bona."

ence of evil in the universe of a God of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness? On all the answers which have obtained currency, it was summarily remarked by Bayle[3], that "the origin of evil is both inexplicable and incomprehensible," and that "all objections to the reasons for it are more agreeable to natural light, than these reasons themselves."

This opinion of Bayle's has had great influence in the world since it was written, and appears still to express the most popular view of the subject. To the former clause no objection can be made, provided it be restricted to mean, that no conceivable theory can be known to give a perfect solution of the difficulty. But the language of Bayle, and especially the latter clause, though it agrees very well with his undecided philosophy, is not a satisfactory statement of the case. It will be a principal purpose of this chapter to show, that the reason and explanation which have been most frequently given, especially by Christian writers, and never more distinctly than by those of the earliest centuries,—that in which the best thinkers

[3] Dict., art. "Paulicians." When this chapter was written, I was not aware of the complete demolition of Bayle's "insolvable objections," in the "Theodicæa" of Leibnitz. Hitherto the objections have had more influence than the answers to them. It saves thought and trouble, to conclude that difficulties are inexplicable. But the wisdom of Leibnitz still belongs to the future.

of all ages have been content to rest,—is more agreeable to natural light than any objection which can be brought against it.

It is proposed to show that there is one answer, which, though it cannot pretend to be a dogmatic solution of the question why and how evil has been introduced, is yet sufficient to meet every objection it can furnish to the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God;—an answer perfectly agreeable to reason in itself, and which remains unanswered, because the replies which have been alleged against it are founded on inadmissible assumptions.

It will be borne in mind that we are now considering the question as one of natural religion, without reference to revelation. To answer rational objections to revealed doctrines, reason must be set against itself. Its legitimate conclusions cannot be in collision with the Word of God.

Dualism.

5. On most of the numerous answers which the question has received from time immemorial, it will not be necessary to dwell. The world is not likely to see a revival of dualism; neither of that form of it, which makes the eternal principle of evil to reside in an eternal malignant being, nor of that which places it in the untractableness of eternal

matter. These notions were once very prevalent as attempted solutions of the question. It was one of the first resources of imperfect theism, to regard the Beneficent Creator as limited by self-existent evil, and therefore less than Absolute Omnipotence. Evil, it is evident, does exist; it cannot have originated itself; it cannot have been created by God; it must therefore contain a self-existent and eternal principle, whether this be something living or dead.

Evil a confusion of things.

6. To this theory the answer ascribed to Basil is sufficient, as far as it goes. Evil, it is said, is no real thing, but a mere negation. It exists in finite beings, but has no foundation of its existence in God. This may be known to be true. It may generally be seen to consist in a confusion introduced into the relations of things, which are not evil in their essential nature. It is often produced by those powers of finite beings, which must have been communicated by God, and are always capable of a good application, and intended to have their proper use.

It was observed in the preceding chapter, that the permanent arrangements and laws of nature, lie unchanged beneath the confusion of evil. Disease, famine, and the rest of the ills to which flesh is heir, are not inherent in the constitution

of things, nor the results of any contrivance, or any agent of nature which is evil in itself; but arise from derangement or disturbance of its ordinary course. They are constantly to be traced to our own misconduct; and there can be little doubt that all the ills which shorten life have originated in transgression of the organic laws. Death indeed is a law of nature; but considered in itself, independently of all the causes of premature old age and extinction, we have no right to consider it an evil. By the light of revelation, it is seen to be an evil; but on grounds of reason, we can say no more than that nature bestows on man a life which has its term, and which must ultimately cease, through the natural and painless decay of prolonged old age.

In the physical world, evil is nothing real, but a confusion of things real. The same is true of the moral world. No power of man's nature is evil of itself. God has bestowed on him no faculties of mind or body, and allows him to possess none, but such as have their good application, and are intended for their proper use.

It is true that man is naturally prone to evil. This is a matter of experience, as well as a truth of Scripture. But it does not mean that he possesses any powers or faculties which are essentially evil, but that he is prone to misapply his

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good powers, and to transgress the bounds of temperance imposed by nature.

Reason and revelation concur in the truth, that *God is the Only Creator*[4]; that the powers of nature and of man, however they may be disordered and misapplied, are none of them, in themselves, derived from any other. There is therefore no such thing as absolute evil. It neither exists independently, nor rests in the Infinite Being. It is not created by Him like mind and matter; nor is it an eternal law, having its origin and standard in any self-existent being. There is no such thing as a law of evil. It is always a violation of law. It exists only as a disturbance or confusion of things good. Thus far Basil's opinion is a competent answer to theories of dualism. The existence of evil need not be referred to an eternal being; it may be accounted for by the perversion of the powers of finite beings.

The subordination theory.

7. But the answer, though true thus far, does not approach the common difficulty of the subject. The question is,—Why are finite beings permitted to disorder the works of God? Why do they

[4] Ἐν ὑποστάσει καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὴν οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ κακία· Δημιουργὸς ποιητὴς τῶν ὅλων. Athan. Orat. c. vi.

Tertullian has a curious expression,—"Deus auctor naturæ, diabolus interpolator." De cult. fœm. I. vii.

possess so dangerous a power? It is no answer to this question to say, with some,—The existence of evil is a greater glory to God, or a greater happiness to mankind, than its non-existence.

It is represented as a greater glory to God, in the doctrine of "the subordination of beings," so well criticised by Dr Johnson, which cannot be better stated than in the lines of Pope;

> "Of systems possible, if 'tis confess'd
> That Wisdom Infinite must form the best;
> Where all must full or not coherent be;
> And all that rises, rise in due degree;
> Then, in the scale of reas'ning life, 'tis plain
> There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man."

Selfish theories.

8. It is represented as a greater happiness to man in the notion of some weak Christians, who thinking themselves to be, by arbitrary appointment, the peculiar favourites of heaven, forget that the Father of all is no respecter of persons, and fall into unworthy opinions of the Divine Nature. This notion is briefly expressed by an early Church writer,—"*Felix culpa, quæ talem Redemptorem meruit;*" to which Bayle has replied in a short comparison, less reverent, than it is forcible and difficult to answer.

Another theory, to be classed under this head, is to the effect that the existence of evil makes the good to be more enjoyed. This has even been

supposed to be a sufficient account of the final ruin of the wicked; a notion, which, it is a shame to say, has had its advocates among modern Christians. Thus Mr. Parker quotes from Jonathan Edwards;—"The destruction of the unfruitful is of use, to give the saints a greater sense of their own happiness, and of God's grace to them." "Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God in making them so to differ." When Mr. Parker quotes these inhuman and detestable sentiments, and holds them up to odium, he is quite within the province of human judgment. Man may know enough of himself to be sure that the misery of others can never increase his happiness. He may know that such thoughts are unworthy of the Supreme Being. Conscience, reason, and human nature cry out against them. Even the language of Mr. Parker is not exaggerated, when applied to such sentiments as these.

To all such theories one answer may be returned. God is Infinite; and Infinite Goodness will extend to every finite being, and will provide for the happiness of all. He is omnipresent in His agency, universal in His Love to His creatures. His Work is manifest in the least monad that exists, no less than in the brightest star of

the sky. His beneficent Power issues forth in creation, to the least, as well as to the greatest of His works,—to the meanest creature of the earth, and to the highest Archangel of heaven. As nothing is too great for His Infinity, so nothing is too minute for His Omnipresence. He is good to all His creatures, and has provided for the well-being and happiness of all. This doctrine of theism is that of natural and revealed religion. No other is consistent with any worthy conception of the Divine Perfections.

The free-will solution.

9. Whence then evil? In considering the question of Freewill, we found reason to conclude that man possesses an originating power of action. The origin of evil has often been referred to this faculty of created beings. Writers who have rejected all theories which make God the Author of evil, have been content to lay it to the charge of finite wills, and have thought it possible, by this means, to reconcile the prevalence of mischief with the perfections of the Creator[5].

[5] Two other decisions on the question of evil are extant; that of Cicero in his de Nat. Deor., where he answers the difficulties of Cotta with the words,—"Quoniam advesperascit dabis nobis diem aliquem, ut contra ista dicamus;" and that of Mr. Babbage in the "Ninth Bridgewater Treatise," which is much to the same effect. Many readers will regard these as the wisest answers.

It has been proposed to show, that no valid objection can be made to this solution of the difficulty; and to give reasons for declining to admit those objections to it, which have been said by Bayle to be "more suited to human capacity, and more founded on our good sense and ideas of order."

Objections to it. Divine helps.

10. One of the objections alleged by Bayle is altogether at variance with good sense, and opposed to every conception of the Author of all order. "Divine helps," he says, "seasonably bestowed, and acting on our will, would keep us from danger, yet leave us free." It is quite within the limits of knowledge to see, with certainty, that such Divine helps could not proceed from an Unchangeable Creator. He is not a Being who can have recourse to partial contrivances and temporary expedients. He cannot fail in His purposes, nor see them turn out contrary to His expectation. If He have created man to be free, it is as little to be expected that He will interfere with his free agency to keep him from falling, as that He will suspend the law of gravitation, to save the head of one who madly throws himself down a precipice. If He have determined eternally to endow a creature with the likeness of His own originating Power,

it is impossible that He can interfere to prevent that power from being abused [6].

Why are creatures free?

11. Another objection alleged against the explanation of evil by the misapplication of freewill in finite beings, is to the effect that an infinitely wise Creator knew beforehand the use to which His gifts would be applied; and, if infinitely good, would have bestowed no gift so fatal to its possessors, as freedom is found to be to mankind. Freedom is a high and noble faculty to those who use it well; but to the great mass of men, it brings mischief and misery in the present, and, revelation assures us, miserable ruin in the future. Who would not forfeit the gift, on condition that he should be raised by Divine Power to the highest excellence of which his nature, without will, would be capable? Who would not prefer to live for ever in that dependent blessedness, which must belong to beings incapable of resisting the Will of God?

Why then has so fatal a gift been communicated to those who were so likely to abuse it, and whose misapplication of it must have been fore-

[6] "Puta intercessisse, puta rescidisse illum arbitrii libertatem, dum revocat ab arbore, nonne exclamaret Marcion; O Dominum futilem, instabilem, infidelem, rescindentem quæ instituit." Tertullian adv. Marc. ii. 7.

seen? Is not the communication of a power so dangerous, inconsistent either with the Wisdom or with the Goodness of the Creator?

The question unreasonable.

12. To these questions it may be answered, that their objection is one which we may reasonably decline to entertain, because it is founded on assumptions which go beyond the limits of possible knowledge. It is not the part of the creature to demand of the Creator,—Why hast thou made me thus? The question is not only irreverent, it is irrational.

The existence of evil is a truth of experience: the freewill of finite beings, its assumed explanation, may be said to be a second truth of experience. Evil is continually seen to be the result of freewill; and to give this account of its origin, is within the limits of the comprehension. But to demand that the dangerous gift shall be reconciled with the perfections of the Creator, is manifestly to pass beyond these limits. It may be according to human notions of goodness, to withhold a gift which we know will be misapplied; but to measure the Divine agency by our views of goodness, is plainly to go beyond our province. We cannot state it as a universal rule, that to bestow a gift which we know will be abused, is in every case an act of unkindness. The donor may

have good reasons for bestowing it: there may be circumstances which would justify him in our opinion, if they were known. If it be difficult then, as we know it is, to pronounce judgment on the actions of a man, it is infinitely more difficult to constitute ourselves judges of God.

Thus far, we have declined to entertain the objection to the freewill solution, because we cannot know the circumstances of the case; it may be answered yet farther, that we cannot even know the objection to have any meaning. It appears, no doubt, to present to the mind a possible alternative to the existence of evil; but the mind can, by no means, know it to be an alternative which is possible in the nature of things. The objection pretends to touch a question on the constitution of things, and the conditions of creation. It is not enough then that it gives us a conceivable notion; we must know that the notion can be realized. But this knowledge is beyond us. We have perfect evidence of the *fact* that all things are the works of God; but *we know nothing of the conditions and possibilities of creation.*

To entertain any objection to the constitution of created beings, reason must be competent to understand the Divine operation, and to search the Mystery of the Divine Will and Nature. The

Author of creation is Self-existent, and the necessity of His Nature lies beneath that Almighty agency, which is determined by His Eternal Attributes, and fills the universe with wonders. Of the manner of His operation,—of His Eternal Will and Nature, we can know no more than that He cannot be constrained by external necessity, and that, within Himself, there is no such thing as mechanical necessity, nor an evolution of being similar to any material developments. When we consider the mystery of the human will, we may well decline to dogmatize on the Divine Will.

Pantheism the alternative of evil.

13. *We know nothing of the conditions and possibilities of creation.* When it is demanded why created beings possess the dangerous faculty of freewill, it may be answered, from our human point of view, by another question;—How can we know that intelligent beings could exist at all, without that self-originating power which we call *will?* We are accustomed in thought to separate will and intelligence; and express, by these names, two classes of facts which the mind can consider as distinct. But it does not follow that they are really distinct and separable faculties. On the contrary, we have had good reasons, in the former part of this treatise, for concluding that there can be no such thing as intelligence, no first princi-

ples of knowledge, no perception of oneself as a being distinct from the world, indeed nothing more than the bare sensibility which belongs to the lowest creatures, without the possession of that very power of will which is the source of evil.

It would seem, in short, that as far as we can know, there are reasons for concluding the only alternative to the possibility of evil to be extreme pantheism; and that, without independent energy of the created soul, there could be no such thing as a distinctness of being between the creature and the Creator, no distinct intelligence nor personality of the finite creature [7].

The irreverent demand of scepticism,—'Why hast Thou made me thus?' may therefore be tantamount to the question,—'Why hast Thou created me at all?' Nor, indeed, will extreme scepticism shrink from giving utterance to it, even in this form. But it is not less irrational, than it is irreverent. It is too much to demand, that God should restrain the energy of His Eternal Being, and keep back for ever the manifestations of His Glory in heaven and earth, lest some of His crea-

[7] It is curious that Bayle, after his refutation of Spinozism, falls into something very like it, in his arguments upon this subject. He says,—"According to our idea of a created being, we cannot understand that it can be a principle of action, that it can move itself, and create in itself any modalities by a power peculiar to itself." Art. "Paulicians," note F.

tures should abuse the gifts which He bestows. It is beyond all modesty, to expect that His Power shall never be Creative,—that He shall exist eternally without His works, lest the wilfully impious and immoral should suffer the consequences of their own misconduct. It is contrary to reason, because, even if it can be supposed, according to any human conceptions of Infinite Power and Goodness, that the creation might not have taken place, or might have been different from what it is, yet we can have no means of knowing that our human conceptions are correspondent to the Truth of the Divine Nature. *For any thing reason can discover* to the contrary, Infinite Power may have been necessarily determined by Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, both to create the universe, and to create it such as it is. This answer is not proposed as the true solution of the difficulty. We have declined to dogmatize on the Divine Will. It is an answer to the rationalist on his own ground, and is a sufficient reason for declining to admit his objection. That it involves nothing inconsistent with any true conception of the Divine Perfections, will presently be observed more at length.

Divine motives.

14. But another question remains. Suppose it to be true that there could be no existence of creatures distinct from the Deity, without the

communication of powers, which it must be possible for them to misapply; still, it has sometimes been alleged, since Perfect Beauty, and Holiness, and Goodness belong to the Divine Nature,—since God is the Source of all perfection,—He must be able to captivate the souls of all the creatures,—and to bind them to Himself by motives of admiration, and adoration, and love, stronger than any temptation to turn aside.

But here again reason is beyond itself, since it cannot know that what it demands lies within the eternal possibilities of things. Here, as before, the rationalist may be answered on his own ground, that, for any thing he can know to the contrary, it is possible that all creation, is of necessity a development from the lower to the higher, and that no existing being does or can come into existence, in the full possession of its powers. This is the rule of nature in all our experience. Every human being gains the use of his faculties by intercourse with the world. The great globe itself has advanced, through many revolutions, from a primæval condition certainly less complex than its present state. Human faculties cannot discover but that it may be the necessary rule, that creation is, in all cases, a gradual process. It may therefore be an impossibility in the nature of things, that man, in the commencement of his being, should have been

able to comprehend the Beauty of Holiness, and the Loveliness of the Supreme Good; or to admit the influence of those high motives, which must have constrained him, if he had felt them, to act otherwise than he does [8].

It is the declaration of Holy Writ;—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." For any thing that man can ascertain to the contrary, this may not only be a truth of fact, but an essential necessity of things. It may be as necessary for all created beings, to gain, by the life of prayer and work, the power of comprehending the attainable blessedness and excellence of their future condition; as it is necessary for man, as he is, to gain the use of his faculties, only through intercourse with the world. There is nothing, within the limits of human knowledge, to make us assume it possible that any created being could, even through Divine Power, spring all at once into the fulness of intellectual and moral life.

Revelation of superior beings.

15. But we must also take account of Revelation.

[8] On this question, and its relation to the Divine Omnipotence, Irenæus has, Θεῷ ὡς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν πάντα δυνατά· Οἷός τε ἦν παρασχεῖν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὸ τέλειον, ὁ δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἀδύνατος λαβεῖν αὐτό. (Adv. Hær. iv. 73.)

When reason is found incompetent to judge of the possibilities of creation, it may be the next resource of scepticism to quote revelation against itself. Was not Adam created by the Word of God in the perfection of the Divine Image? And are there not angels, and orders of heavenly beings superior to man, who never knew the state of human weakness and infirmity; who were always, from their birth as sons of God, far exalted above the weakness and frailty of mankind?

Granted. But is it an impossibility, even for beings thus high and perfect, to fall into opposition to the Will of God? On the contrary, revelation also teaches us that the origin of evil was with the angels, and spread from them to human kind. And it discovers the consequences of evil to them, to have been far more fatal than to man. This is what reason might anticipate. However high and noble the nature of created beings, there is always an infinite distance between them and God. Though they may possess faculties capable of infinite development, and, through eternal ages, may perpetually be rising above themselves, yet there is always an abyss of mystery beneath the finite, always a perfection of glory and beauty, which is far above out of their sight. There would seem then to be always a possibility that they might sin against the Creator, by reaching to mysteries

unknown, and arrogating to themselves the prerogatives of the Infinite. It is also to be anticipated that the effects of sin in creatures so exalted, if not even irremediable, would be far more pernicious than to the frailty and feebleness of humanity.

If it be imagined that the Creator might have placed us in a state less liable to error, it must be remembered that if to sin be unavoidable, the consequences of sin are not fatal; the remedy is within our reach, and is of universal efficacy. It may be the fact, and, for any thing we can tell, the necessary fact, that we owe these advantages, under the Divine Goodness, to the weakness and imperfection of our nature.

Before we affirm that it would have been better for us, upon the whole, and with reference to our eternal existence, had the Creator placed us, from the first, in a higher and less imperfect condition; it would be well to consider whether it would have been better for us as men, to have come at once into the world, in the fulness of bodily and mental strength, without the previous weakness and education of childhood;—in all the energy of fresh self-will, and under the strong incentives to novelty, without the education of childhood, or the acquired power of self-control. It might be a curious inquiry what would be the result of such

a state, and whether it could even continue. It may possibly be the fact, that our present imperfection, and our inability to comprehend the high things of God, may be as necessary in the scheme of our immortal existence, as the helplessness of childhood in the economy of human life. There is reason in the Christian precept, that man must become as a little child.

Incompetency of reason.

16. Some observations will hereafter be made on the Divine Purpose, discovered to us in Scripture, in the present existence of man, as a weak and fallible creature. It appears evident, from what has been said, that our natural faculties and means of knowledge cannot warrant the conclusion, that any state of existence, if even possible in itself, could be more desirable as the commencement of immortal being, than this present life. It must therefore be going beyond our limits to say, according to the common assertions on this subject, that God preferred the existence of sin to a sinless universe; or might have been more beneficent to His creatures, had He withheld from them a gift which, He must have foreseen, would be abused; or had He drawn and influenced them by constraining motives of the true, the beautiful, and the good. To make such assertions, we must first have solved the unfathomable question of the

Divine Will, and must have gained an acquaintance with the realities and possibilities of creation. All we can say is, that in the necessary Existence of the Supreme Being and the manner of His agency; in the dependence of the finite upon the Infinite, and the necessary relations of finite things to one another; certain conditions are to be satisfied, to give the possibility of creation. Reason is incompetent to make any objection to the constitution of things, because these conditions are utterly unknown.

Just conception of Omnipotence.

17. It remains briefly to notice the question, whether the notion of necessity in any conditions of creation, involve any thing inconsistent with the Perfect and Infinite Attributes of the Creator. If it do, we fail to silence the sceptical cavil, that "the objections to reasons for the existence of evil are more agreeable to natural light than these reasons themselves." It cannot be difficult to show, that there is nothing derogatory to Infinite Power or Goodness, in regarding the possibility of evil as necessarily implied in the very existence of a distinct created being.

Not to the Divine Omnipotence. For even *Omnipotence cannot work contradictions.* This is universally allowed, or rather it is a mere truism. But it is important to observe, what is the root of

the whole difficulty, that this word *contradiction*, when applied to the works of God, must not be restricted to its human sense; otherwise we limit the possibilities of Infinite Power by the conceptions of the finite mind. The postulate holds good, no doubt, with reference to the human faculties, because we are warranted in assuming their veracity, and regard them, *within their province*, as capable judges of what is true. But it is only within their province. They can know but a limited and small portion of universal truth. Hence that which is contradictory to the human mind is impossible, but it does not include all impossibilities. *The perfect measure of possibility is the Intelligence of the Divine Mind;* and the impossible is what is contradictory to the Divine Intelligence. Hence when it is said that God is Omnipotent, it is meant that He is the Source of all power that is or can be. Infinite Power is no mere figment of human conception, but extends to the infinite possibilities of things, with reference to the Infinite Mind.

This conclusion appears to be, in effect, equivalent to the opinion of various writers upon the subject of evil,—that for instance of Soame Jenyns, whose observations upon this point met with the censure of Dr. Johnson. But this part of the illustrious Doctor's criticism has had more influence than it deserves.

"Omnipotence," says Jenyns, "cannot work contradictions; it can only effect all possible things. But so little are we acquainted with the whole system of nature, that we know not what are possible and what are not; but . . . we have reason to conclude, that to endue created beings with perfection, that is, to produce good exclusive of evil, is one of those impossibilities which even Infinite Power cannot accomplish."

"This," remarks Johnson, "is elegant and acute,"—a more just observation than some which follow,—"but will by no means calm discontent, or silence curiosity; for whether evil can be wholly separated from good or not, it is plain that they may be mixed in various degrees, and, as far as human eyes can judge, the degree of evil might have been less without any impediment to good."

To this it may be answered with certainty, that human eyes ought to see their incompetency to judge of the matter at all. Johnson here falls into the very common confusion between the subjective and the objective,—between our possible conceptions of things and the possibilities of the things themselves. We see good and evil variously mixed and in different degrees: we can *conceive* that what we see to be varied might perhaps be infinitely varied: we can conceive that the creation might have been very different from what it is. But our conceptions are no measure of the

conditions of creation, or of the possibilities of things. We have no right to argue from our possible conceptions, that the Creator might have placed us in a more desirable state of existence, till we know it to fall objectively within the infinite sphere of possibility. It would seem, in short, that the observation of Jenyns contains enough to calm all reasonable discontent, and to silence all reasonable curiosity upon the subject.

And of Infinite Goodness.

18. Nor can the notion of necessity in the conditions of creation be inconsistent with the Attribute of Infinite Goodness. The Infinite Attributes are all in harmony, or rather all in unity with one another. Love and Holiness must be One and inseparable in the Deity. But human knowledge is discursive, and proceeds by partial views. Considering the Divine Attributes as distinct, it is obliged to regard them as limiting one another,—the Infinite limiting the Infinite. Our modes of thought can thus be but distant shadows of the truth. We may avoid the solecism by regarding the manifestation of Infinite Love as always in accordance with the law of universal order. The Love of God does not cease to be Infinite, because it is in accordance with His Holiness; nor because it tends to what is best upon the whole.

Infinite Goodness, then, does not confer uni-

versal and unconditional happiness on every creature. It is the inexhaustible Source of all possible blessedness, and provides for the happiness of every creature, in subordination to the harmony of the universe. It is in the moral nature of man, that natural religion finds its only assurance, that the Divine Care extends to individuals. God has implanted the sense of right in the heart, and has thereby given the assurance that He will deal equitably with all. The conviction may often be feeble, till it finds support in revelation.

No dogmatic solution.

19. It will have been seen that freewill has not been alleged as a dogmatic solution of the difficulties which attend the existence of evil, but as the best attainable by man, and one to which no reasonable answer can be made. The full solution of the question may be wholly beyond the reach of the faculties. This may suffice to obviate all objections to the Divine Perfections. Man has evidences, in himself and in nature, that the Creator is infinitely powerful and good. The existence of evil cannot set aside this conclusion. It may show that Infinite Power and Goodness are not to be measured by finite conceptions, and are not mere extensions of human qualities. It may prove His Nature and Agency to be above the thoughts of man, His Infinite Perfections to be incomprehen-

sible. It cannot prove them to be finite. As reason demonstrates His Existence, though it cannot search the mysteries of His Nature; so it concludes that He is infinitely powerful and good, though it can gain but a faint and distant view of Infinite Power and Goodness.

Summary of objections.

20. To sum up the chief objections which may be alleged. If it be argued, that reason is competent to infer the Character of the Creator from the ills of life, as well as from the manifestations of His Wisdom and Benevolence; it may be answered, that these are evinced in the abiding frame of nature, and in the essential properties and laws which make up the constitution of things, while evil is, at the most, a deprivation of good. If it be rejoined, that, at least, we thus impose limitations on the Divine Power and Goodness; it may be answered, that the limitations belong only to the constitution of created things, and may be inseparable from it. If it be asserted that many evils might be removed, without the introduction of greater evils; we may reply, that our view is too limited to discover the effects of partial changes to universal nature. If, that Infinite Goodness must extend, not only to the universal frame, but to every creature; it does extend to every creature. If this opinion be declared inconsistent with facts;

then the life present must be inconsiderable, compared with the life to come. Infinite Equity requires it. If it be thought that all the creatures might have been drawn to goodness, by inspiring motives of the Divine Nature; it must be called to mind, that we are imperfect judges of the Divine Conduct, and cannot know the assumption to be either possible in the nature of things, or, on the whole, to be desired, if it were. If it be insisted that the ills of life are so great, and the abuse of freewill so universal, that it had been better to have kept back the gift from man; it is a sufficient answer, that we do not know whether, without it, man could have existed at all. If that occasional Divine helps might have kept the will upright; the conception is unworthy of the Divine Conduct, nor can we know what would have been the results of such a system. If the sceptic go the length of asserting, that, in the view of all the ills of life and death, it had been better that the human race had never existed; the answer is still more conclusive, —man is responsible for his wilful deeds, and the wilfully impious has no right to demand that the agency of the Creator shall be restrained, or the happiness of eternal life kept back from the righteous, that he may not suffer the consequences of his own actions. We have repudiated the unrighteous notion that God has willed the ruin of

any, to increase the happiness of the rest. It were equally unjust, for the sake of the vicious, to withhold life and happiness from the virtuous.

Virtuous endeavour.

21. The practical conclusion is obvious. We cannot know what might have been; but we see clearly what is. We cannot fathom the mystery of iniquity to its origin. Experience gives us no information; conscience is silent; Scripture does not satisfy curiosity. But we see that we are able to do evil; experience, conscience, and Scripture concur, that its worst injury is to ourselves. They declare that God abideth Holy, and has given us some power of coming nearer to the law of harmony and holiness. It is the practical lesson of all religion, natural and revealed;—live by *the law of love to God and man*, and evil will not hurt you. Even suffering will cease to injure; it will elevate and purify the soul, and will work out the high destiny appointed it. The heathen Stoic could repay himself for suffering by the pride of self-esteem, and the complacency of conscience. Even he conjectured that the Spirit of God dwells with the virtuous, and could live in active goodness and equanimity. It should not be difficult to the Christian, to whom the truth is something more than a conjecture. He need not be disquieted by the ills of time, nor anxious about

the destinies of eternity. He may trust in God and be at peace. He need not have recourse to uncertain fancies, such as that of "the neutral angels," who neither stood nor fell; nor seek, in a state prior to life, to account for the inequalities of the present. His eye is towards the future. He is satisfied that God knows all things, and will set all things right. It is enough that He is the Eternal Lord, as well as the Lord of this life of time. Suffering in time is without rule that we can perceive, and points to a future judgment in righteousness. Suffering in eternity cannot befal us, but through our own fault. Of this truth the soul may find an evidence in itself. If it suffer, it will be self-condemned. The Eternal Lord is the Creator of this life of time. TIME IS SHORT, ETERNITY IS LONG.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

1. The evidences of theism establish the truth, that the universe has been created and ordered with Intelligent Purpose, and that its Author is a Being of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness.

It has been shown that all knowledge of existence can be no more than relative. The Absolute, or Internal Nature of the Deity is necessarily unknown and incomprehensible. He is known as the real Cause of things visible, but only in an indirect way,—through His relations to man, and by means of the manifestations of Power and Goodness, in creation and in redemption.

Of the Internal Nature of the Godhead, natural religion can give only a negative knowledge; or, can use positive language, which is but partially or metaphorically applicable. Negatively, it excludes from the Infinite Being all the imperfections of

finite beings; metaphorically, the Incommunicable Glory may be imaged under the figure of Light. Human words are sometimes employed, which are but partially applicable; the word *Person*, for instance, cannot be understood to transfer to the Infinite Being those conditions and limitations of time and place, which are inseparable from the notion of finite personality.

The Divine Glory.

2. Our negative knowledge of the Mysterious Nature of the Deity, may be comprised under the Attribute of the Divine Glory, or Blessedness. This is generally accounted by theological writers, to be a distinct Attribute of the Most High. Perhaps it would be more correct to regard it as the Unity and Perfection of His Nature, in all its Attributes known and unknown, than an Attribute which can be conceived as distinct. The Divine Nature may be known to possess unity and harmony in itself. The Attributes of the Self-existent cannot fall into disorder or inconsistency with one another. They can never cross nor thwart one another, nor be subject to struggle for predominance, like the various affections of man.

In the Unity of His Nature then, the Supreme Source of all perfection, must be regarded as containing in Himself a certain Fulness, and Self-Sufficiency, and Glory. The riches of creation

are indications of the eternal riches of His Being. The Power and Wisdom displayed throughout the universe, must have issued forth from boundless resources, which we cannot but conceive to be infinite. But we can form no positive conceptions of the Divine Glory, except with reference to its manifestations in creation; unless revelation discover that any affection, similar to those of man, as Love, for instance, is an Eternal Attribute of the Divine Blessedness. We shall find reasons in Holy Scripture for believing it to be an eternal truth, not altogether beyond the limits of positive knowledge, that *God is Love.*

It may be questioned, however, whether there be warrant in reason or revelation for expressions not infrequent, as that God loves Himself with an Infinite Love, or delights eternally in His own perfections. Such statements, if not irreverent, seem to exceed the limits of the understanding[1]. We may know from creation, that He delights in the order and harmony of His works, and that the Law of Order has its residence in His Eternal Nature: but of any Divine Affections prior to creation, natural religion can give us no information.

[1] Thus Wegscheider has, "Deus suam perfectionem per intellectum plane cognoscit, et per voluntatem summe amat, inque ea pacate et quiete acquiescit; ex qua acquiescentia oritur gaudium, quo Deus se ipso, tanquam summo bono delectatur." Inst. Theol. cap. iii. § 75.

3. The Nature of the Deity can be viewed by man only under several distinct Attributes. Without presuming to comprehend the Divine Nature, or to measure the Infinite by human conceptions or classifications; we may think of Him as ONE INFINITE SPIRIT, known under the Attributes of *Self-existence*, *Freedom*, *Immutability*; *Omnipresence*, *Omniscience*, *Omnipotence*; *Wisdom*, *Holiness*, and *Love*. These words may include all the knowledge we can possess of the Divine Nature.

Self-existence.

4. Dr. Clarke defines the idea of a Self-existing Being, to be that of a Being, the supposition of Whose non-existing is an express contradiction [2]. This definition is not free from the common confusion between outward truth, and the mind's conceptions of it. A reality external to the mind may necessarily exist, and its contrary will then be an impossibility; but it does not follow that the *supposition* of this real impossibility is a contradiction. This depends upon the extent of the faculties. It must be so to sufficient intelligence, but it may be otherwise with the intelligence of man.

A similar remark applies to Dr. Clarke's observation, that this necessity must antecedently force itself upon us, whether we will or no, even when

[2] Being and Attributes, § iii.

we are endeavouring to suppose that no such Being exists. It is true that the cultivated human mind always has the conception of the Self-Existent Being. But this is a matter of experience. It cannot be assumed except of infinite understanding, that it must know every necessity of things, and always perceive its opposite to be contradictory.

The Supreme Being must therefore be regarded as existing through the Internal, though Incomprehensible, Necessity of His Own Nature.

Freedom.

5. The Divine Freedom excludes all subjection to external constraint, and also to all internal connexion of physical causes and relations. The Creator acts with Intelligence and wise Purpose, and according to Eternal Holiness and Love. This truth is inconsistent with the notion of a being unfolding or developing in the universe, by any thing like physical evolution. The Mystery of the Divine Will, and its relation to the Eternal Nature of the Most High, has been regarded as beyond our sphere.

Immutability.

6. The Immutability of the Deity, is included in His superiority to relations of time. Change implies progression of time, and is therefore excluded from the Nature of Him Who is above time.

There is an inherent absurdity in the conception of eternal and necessary change. Reason claims to rest upon the Unchangeable, and looks to God as superior to all succession of qualities, as One Who changes not.

Omnipresence, Omniscience, Omnipotence.

7. The Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence of the Deity are included in His Infinity. Superior to relations of space, He cannot be confined within limits, but must be present at every point of space. Superior to relations of time, He embraces, in one eternal present, the past, the present, and the future of His creatures; and sees always, and at once, all things which are, have been, or shall be. Superior to relations of causality; originating, but not acted upon from without, He is the Source of all power, and therefore Almighty. The notion of a universal Creator implies that of Power superior to all the powers of the universe. From the manifestation of stupendous power in nature, the mind cannot help rising to the notion of Omnipotence, and regards the Creator of all worlds, as the Originator of all things which exist or can exist. It can form no conception of His relations to space and time, but such as makes Him omnipresent and omniscient. Space cannot separate Him from things therein, nor time from things past or future. However in-

comprehensible to finite beings, He is present in every point of space, as much as if that point were all; and all duration is one present eternity with Him.

Omniscience by physical causes.

8. The Divine Omniscience is sometimes understood to consist in the power of reading the past, in all its effects which remain in the present; in the same way that Foreknowledge is placed in the knowledge of all present causes, in their subtile nature and connexions, and in all the potency which belongs to them. These causes, it is thought, must result in all the existences, and all the events of the future.

This notion of Omniscience of the past has been developed into a physical theory of the Divine Omniscience, founded on the truth, that the light by which bodies is seen,—or any other of the movements of the universe,—is not propagated instantaneously, but occupies a certain time in its transmission; and, consequently, that as sound is not heard at a distance till after the explosion which caused it, so, at large distances, events will not be seen till long after they are past. From the moon, for instance, they will be seen within a second; from the sun, not till after eight minutes; from the distant planets not till some hours has elapsed; and from the stars, only after

some years; or, it may be, from stars of the sixteenth or twentieth magnitude, after many ages. Hence it needs but an organ of sight of the same kind as that of man, only infinitely more acute and powerful, to be able, from some distance in space, to behold, as if it were present in time, any event of the world's history.

Foreknowledge.

9. We need not dwell on this idle speculation, except to observe, that its application to the Divine Omniscience of the past may be quite as reasonable, as any attempt by means of physical causes, to explain the foreknowledge of things to come. This notion has been adopted by some writers, who have consistently maintained, that what is now known as certain must now be determined as certain, and that foreknowledge must necessarily imply foreappointment. Others, recoiling from fatalism and its consequences, have sought to defend human liberty by the denial of the Divine Omniscience, alleging that God *may* know all things, but does not; just as He may do all things possible, but does not. It is sometimes said to be a contradiction, to affirm that a thing is known as certain, while it remains uncertain. The most complete and certain knowledge, they say, of a free agent who is yet indeterminate, is to know him as indeterminate, till he

make his choice. But these notions are little consistent either with any reasonable conceptions of the Absolute Being, or with the scriptural statements of His Omniscience.

Others, as Dr. Clarke, have more wisely sought to evade the difficulty, by affirming that Foreknowledge can have no more influence on things future, than knowledge on things past; affirming that God certainly knows all things beforehand, and this without compromise of man's freedom; but declining all question as to the *how*.

There can be little doubt of the truth of this opinion. To suppose the Supreme Being knows future events only in their present causes, is to limit His Nature to our human conceptions of time. But if He be transcendent to all conditions of time, we may then conceive the whole eternal course of present, past, and future to be spread eternally before Him, and all the events of time with all their causes and connexions, including the loose chains, and broken links, and accidental knots, which make up the tangled web of human life, at once manifest to His eyes, yet as independent, in their connexion, of all Influence from the Omniscient, as the several articles which lie together on a table, are independent of the mind which views them. This, no doubt, is to make the Divine Omniscience Incomprehensible. And

it may be expected that the Divine Foreknowledge will lie beyond the human understanding.

But although the Divine Attributes are unsearchable, yet they become easily intelligible in their results and manifestations. It is a truth which intimately concerns us, that God is not far from every one of us; that He hears every secret prayer, and sees every past action of my life, as though I were doing it now; that He knows each action, from its secret source within to all its manifold results; and is perfectly acquainted with all I can do or suffer, to all future periods of my being.

BOOK IV.

SCRIPTURAL REVELATION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.
OBJECTIONS OF MODERN DEISM.

CHAPTER I.

EVIDENCES AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE.

Mankind expect a Revelation.

1. It is a natural anticipation of the heart, that the Eternal Father will break the silence of nature, and reveal Himself more immediately to His creatures. He is manifested in nature and in the soul of man. But the universal expectation of the world looks for a more direct communication of His Will, a more immediate assurance of His Love. We may know Him in nature, by that evidence which is most trustworthy in our knowledge of man,—the evidence of deeds. But the happiness of life consists in the interchange of affection, of sympathy, of thought. The Good Creator has enabled His creatures thus to communicate with one another, through the Divine gift

of language. This very gift creates the expectation, that He will converse with them as He has taught them to converse together. If He be not a blind energy of nature, but a Spirit of Life and Love, we may expect that His dealings with mankind will not be confined to manifestations of the laws and powers of nature; but will extend to that closer communion of mind with mind, which expresses itself in the symbols of human language.

This anticipation, it is sometimes said, has subjected mankind, in every age, to the designs of priestcraft and imposture. But it does not follow that every profession of Revelation is to be rejected without inquiry. Others, as well as Christians, have their religious books; but, previously to all examination of their claims, the most superficial knowledge of their influence in history should guard the candid writer from lightly classing together, as of equal value and authority, the Zend, the Koran, the Vedas, and the Bible. It is probable, before investigation, that the expectation of a Divine Revelation, which is so universal, and so easily imposed upon, is intended by the Creator to have its satisfaction. If there be a Desire of all nations, there is a strong probability that the Desire of all nations will come. Many false Christs may

arise; but there is One True Christ, the Son of God.

The Bible professes to contain the Word of God to man, and the Revelation of His Son to be the Saviour of the world. In directing attention to this Book of books, and especially to its discoveries of the Divine Character, we are met by one or two preliminary questions.

Relation of natural to revealed religion.

2. The first is one which has, of late, led to some discussion,—the relation of natural to revealed religion. Many writers affirm that revelation is wholly inadmissible in the demonstration of the Existence of God. This truth, they say, must be established, before we can listen to any claims of revelation. Others maintain revelation to be all-sufficient, and independent of any support from natural religion. On this question, it is necessary to distinguish between the spontaneous knowledge of the mind, and its later scientific knowledge of reflection. Unquestionably it must possess its religious nature, and must have formed some idea of God, before it can even understand the assertion, that the Bible is the Word of God. But it need not have demonstrated that He exists. To understand the Sacred Name, and to admit His Existence as a probable truth, is enough to place the mind in the posture which listens for informa-

tion from without. Instinctive feelings, an unreflective belief, are, to the greater number of mankind, the only evidences that He exists, and are found sufficient to draw their attention to revelation. The internal testimonies of the Bible to its own veracity, its answer to the wants of the soul and the natural anticipations of the mind, may prove these anticipations to be true.

Our knowledge of God may here again be illustrated by our knowledge of mankind. We do not require a strict demonstration of their existence, before we allow ourselves to listen to the conversation of our fellow men. We must possess the intuitive knowledge of the distinction between what is self, and what is not-self, but need not have examined the question,—'What evidence have we that the outward form of a man corresponds to a real being, and is not a mere phantom of the imagination?'—before we are ready to hear him and to converse with him, and find, in the interchange of words and thought, the strongest evidence that he is a being like oneself.

Similarly of the Divine Existence. Few men have obtained a demonstration: but the religious nature, the spontaneous knowledge of the Supreme Being, is sufficient to engage the attention of the ignorant. They who gladly listen to His Voice in

revelation will find, in its language to the soul, the most convincing evidence that He is.

It may be said, then, that the first evidences of the Being of God lie at the foundation of man's nature. They are found in reason and in feeling. They are then confirmed by observation of the world around. The universe is full of God. In its vastness, its powers, its beauties, its benevolent designs, it speaks of Him to the attentive. The double evidences thus derived from the nature of man and of the world, and their relations to one another, are farther confirmed by inspired testimonies. The Creator vouchsafes to reveal Himself in the constitution of man, in the creation which environs him, and in His written Word. The language of His word, in its relations to the soul, no less than the relations of the world to the intelligent nature of man, may testify that that word is true, when it affirms that He exists.

Theism is thus established by the consistency and harmony of evidences various and independent. Of these, the declarations of revealed religion are not the least forcible and important. Where external nature is silent, they sometimes supply the meaning to the subjective notions of the mind, or afford satisfaction to the doubts, an answer to the deep desires and aspirations of the soul.

BOOK IV. CHAP. I. Evidences of revealed religion.

3. The second preliminary question is that of the Christian evidences. It is foreign to our subject, to examine any of the proofs of revealed religion. It might be useful, if it fell within our scope, to point out how entirely the doctrines and truths of Holy Scripture respond to the wants of the soul. We might dwell on their perfect adaptation to human nature, their knowledge of man's weakness, and of his capabilities; their fitness to correct his debasing passions and sordid dispositions, as well as to purify his heart, and raise him to the perfection of his nature.

The Moral Law of the New Testament, though some writers have imagined they found imperfections, is now confessed, even by infidels, to possess the highest excellence. The Holy Scriptures may be said to have contained, for ages, a clearer knowledge of man's dispositions and wants than he has yet gained respecting himself. They contain rules and precepts which have, in all times, been opposed to the common judgment of mankind, but are at length, after many ages, acknowledged to be in accordance with truth [1]. Thus the Gospel has ever been in advance of the age.

[1] Thus on the preference of the Christian to the heroic character, Mr. Hennell, who rejects revealed religion, perceives that Jesus, in laying "particular stress on virtues of the meek and benevolent kind, accords strikingly with the advanced morality of the present age,

4. But although it is foreign to our aim, to enter on the general question of the Christian evidences, yet we shall find valuable testimony to their truth, in the perfect agreement and consistency of the different doctrines of Scripture which will be brought before us; and that too on deep and mysterious subjects, beyond the common thoughts and conceptions of mankind. It must be borne in mind that the Sacred Scriptures are from a large number of writers, many of them unlearned men, and of distant ages of the world. We may hear them then as unknown witnesses, and shall find ample evidence of their truthfulness in the consistency of their testimony. On the deep and difficult questions of the origin of evil, its remedy, the purpose of life, and the future destiny of man, every one knows how variable and inconsistent with one another, are the systems of human philosophy. If, on such subjects, all the Scripture writers concur, as we shall find they do, in one marvellous story of many distinct parts; we shall have, in their agreement with one another, a strong evidence that they speak, what they profess to speak, the Truth of God.

which admits that the prevalence of these dispositions is the most essential requisite to the improvement of the world." (Christian Theism, so called, ed. 2, p. 8.)

Partiality of revelation.

5. The sceptic will sometimes express his wonder, that God does not converse with all generations, nor reveal His Gospel equally to all. But it can be no imputation on the Divine Goodness, that a state of moral trial is one of difficulty and partial light. Revelation is not silent upon this point. It is the sin of man, rather than the Will of God, which has deprived the world of His more immediate Presence. When the Creator made man upon the earth, He did not leave him to lose himself in the varied wonders of creation, to search for evidences of creative Goodness, to look through nature up to nature's God. He conversed with man in a visible form, and was recognised as the Lord of creation. He gave, it may be, that evidence of His Being and Presence, which is now demanded by the atheist. But fallen man desires not, or is unable to walk with God. As between man and man, it is not till guilt has worn out shame, that the base and false can hide his confusion from another, or meet him with eye to eye; so it is with man before God. Hence the natural feeling, that man cannot see God and live. The Scripture informs us that it was man who first fled from God, not God Who withdrew Himself from man. He who had sinned but once, was covered with shame, and could no longer endure

the Presence of the Most Holy. Even Moses is represented as unable to behold His Glory; and, it is remarkable, it was when the Israelites at Sinai were afraid to hear His voice, that God gave the promise to mankind, to visit them in the form of a Prophet, like unto Moses the meekest of men (Deut. xviii.).

That He does not discover Himself by constant supernatural revelations, but addresses us in His written word, communicated through chosen witnesses, and attested by such evidences as we are accustomed to trust in the common interests of life, should be regarded as an instance of condescension to our infirmities. Such a revelation is besides what is eminently adapted to a state of trial. It supplies all the motives of which we are capable as moral agents, but does not force conviction on the wilful. It speaks plainly to the ears that hear, but is silent to those who desire it to be so. It reveals God to the soul which seeks Him, but hides Him from those who prefer darkness. It is like the pillar of the cloud and fire, in the passage of the Red Sea.

Interpretation of Scripture.

6. A few words on principles of interpretation. Human language must be infinitely inadequate to express Divine Truth, as the mind is incompetent to understand it. But man can have some know-

ledge, however distant; and his language can extend to its limits.

In endeavouring to draw positive knowledge from revelation, it must be assumed that since God has condescended to address us in the language of men, He has employed that language in its common acceptation, and as it would be generally understood. He is the Father of all men: but if His word show favour to any, it is to the poor and unlearned. The language of revelation may therefore be expected to be generally intelligible to the attentive reader. It is contrary to its whole scope and purpose, to explain it on some abstruse system of mythical interpretation, which can be understood by very few, often by none. We have no right to bend it to preconceived notions, nor to tie it down to the Procrustean bed of any human scheme. It is due to its Author, that we come to it as ignorant, and listen reverently to its teaching. It can contain nothing inconsistent with natural truth, nothing at variance with our moral and intellectual nature, however it may go beyond them.

There is but one sense, in which systems of philosophy can aid us in the interpretation of Scripture. Words and notions have been current in all ages, which originated in the schools. The school-learning may therefore explain the usage of

words and notions, in former ages of the world, and so illustrate the language of revelation. That Scriptural words or notions are sometimes taken from profane sources, can, in no case, prove a doctrine to be a mere human speculation [2].

[2] As the Bampton Lectures of Dr. Hampden often appear to argue. Not but that doctrinal speculation has been one impediment to moral improvement, thus thwarting the very purpose of revelation.

CHAPTER II.

DOGMATIC THEISM OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

1. We have applied the term Christian Theism to the doctrine of One God, Infinitely powerful, wise, and good, as established by revealed, as well as natural religion. The Christian cannot but look to the Sacred Scriptures for his highest knowledge of the Creator. The inspired writings, by their dogmatic statements, and, still more, by their discoveries of the Divine Character and Conduct, both confirm and extend the conclusions of natural theism. They also give a positive signification to some of its conceptions, which could otherwise be regarded as but approximate or metaphorical. They have had, besides, so great an influence upon the history of the world and the progress of thought,—to say nothing of the unseen influence of their truths in restraining the natural degeneracy, and checking the degradation of the

race,—that natural theology has been largely indebted to them, for its ability to establish a doctrine of the Supreme Being. There is a revelation of God in man and nature, yet it has not been interpreted without supernatural aid.

Self-existence.

2. Holy Scripture sanctions and establishes the human notion of the Necessity and Inherent Self-Existence of the Supreme Being. It constantly represents Him, as possessing an Existence wholly different from that of finite and dependent beings, and Superior to it. This truth is implied in the name JEHOVAH. It was declared with peculiar solemnity to Moses, when he was called to be the dispenser of a new revelation of the Divine Will to future ages. The Divine and Incommunicable Name,—I AM THAT I AM, was then pronounced by God Himself (Exod. iii. 14; vi. 3; xxxiv. 6).

The same truth is explicitly declared in the New Testament. The Son of God plainly enunciates,—"The Father hath life in Himself" (St. John v. 26),—words to which it is difficult to attach any definite meaning, unless we understand them to assert this inherent and underived Being.

That the Divine Nature is infinite and incomprehensible, is a well-known doctrine of Scripture. "His judgments are Unsearchable, and His Ways past finding out" (Rom. xi. 33; 1 Cor. ii. 11):

His Essence is "Invisible" (Col. i. 15; 1 Tim. i. 17), but His Glory may be imaged as "the Light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. vi. 16); and He is known through His Works in Creation and Redemption (Rom. i. 20; St. John x. 14; xvii. 3).

God is a Spirit.

3. It is a common objection to theology, that it borrows from the nature of man, the conceptions in which it clothes its doctrine of the Infinite Being. The answer of natural religion has been already given. It is confirmed by revelation. The first pages of the Bible discover, what is supported by its whole tenor, that, though man's knowledge of God is derived from that of his own mind, yet there is positive truth in it as far as it goes. "God created man in His own Image." So far, then, as man retains that Image, he has in himself a partial, though infinitely distant resemblance of his Creator. Though fallen from his first estate to one of disorder, he is still a living soul, still an intellectual and moral being. How far he is indebted to the Saviour of all men, for the preservation even of any original powers and gifts of creation, it is not necessary to know exactly. The old creation is disordered, but it is certain that there is no new creation by means of sin. In his mental faculties, man may still discover the

traces of that image in which he was created, and may thus gain, from his own nature, some distant knowledge of the Creator. His likeness to his Maker cannot have consisted in his bodily frame; it must be sought in his mental constitution. The words of Scripture are otherwise without meaning. It may thus be known to be a real truth to man, that "God is a Spirit." The same doctrine is explicitly stated in many well-known passages.

The Attribute of Spirit,—that of acting with purpose, is assigned to God in His works of grace, as well as of creation. His Wisdom is displayed both in nature, and in the eternal counsels of redemption (Acts xv. 18; Eph. i. 3—11); and His purpose is fulfilled by the free powers of self-determining agents, as perfectly as by the laws and forces of inert matter. They accomplish His Will even by resisting it. His Wisdom has so ordained the universe, that even the sins and inconsistencies of mankind, which are foreknown though not foreappointed, cannot fail to be directed to some good end. Finite agents may refuse the gifts of benevolence in themselves, but will effect some purpose of Infinite Wisdom in the universe (Acts ii. 23, &c.). The manifestation of the Divine Wisdom in revelation will be farther considered in following chapters.

4. On the Moral Attributes,—the Holiness and Love of the Creator,—revelation supports and confirms the hesitating inferences of natural religion. It every where represents the Moral Law as the Will of God, and as resting in His Eternal Nature. As man was made in the Divine image, so the creation was "very good." Every thing was adapted to wise ends; all combined in suitableness and perfect order. It is the purpose of Scripture, from the beginning to the end of it, to bring man to conformity with the Divine Will. This is the requisition of the old Law;—"Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy" (Lev. xix. 2). It is no less the injunction of the New Testament;—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (St. Matt. v. 48).

Revelation responds to Conscience, by discovering the Author and the Vindicator of the moral law. As Conscience looks to God for the foundation of the law, and regards it, not as superior to Him and constraining Him, but rather as deriving its origin and force from His Eternal Holiness; so the Bible confirms the decisions of reason and conscience, assuring us that "There is none good but One, that is, God" (St. Matt. xix. 17); that "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5), that His Word is Truth, and all sin a lie, and of the father of lies (St. John xvii. 17;

viii. 44). It declares the sense of right to be indeed as deep as it is felt to be, and the voice of conscience to issue forth from the deep fountain of the soul's being. It speaks of the wicked as "like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Is. lvii. 20); and abounds in passages, which discover the righteous to be like the ocean in the calm majesty of the fresh creation, when "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." It is its constant doctrine, that the difference between the righteous and the wicked, has all the deep reality of the difference between life and death, between communion with God, and separation from Him, in the depths of the soul's being.

That the Scriptures declare the Most High to be the Vindicator of the law of holiness,—a Judge Who is able to reward and punish,—is what needs no particular reference. Their unchanging, unceasing message from Genesis to Revelation, is blessing to the soul that doeth well, woe to the soul that doeth evil; that God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts xvii. 31); that He will "render to every man, according as his work shall be" (Rev. xxii. 12, &c.). They set before us, as the great end of life, that we learn to be followers of Him, Who is "The Image of the Invisible God;" Who

came into the world and suffered, "that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). *To be brought to God then is to be brought to holiness;* the one notion is included in the other, since God is Eternal Holiness (Eph. v. 8; 2 Cor. iii. 18, &c.). And to be one with God, is to be conformed to that Eternal Law of Order, which has its residence in the Divine Nature. We are required "to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24; ii. 10). It was the *purpose* of Christ, in His Life and Death, to "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. ii. 14). Through the inspiring power of faith in Him, we may escape the dominion and the doom of the father of lies, we may have our "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. vi. 22).

The Sufferings and Death of Christ have commonly been regarded by Christians, as the most striking proof of the Divine Justice or Holiness. And with reason. Whatever mysteries may envelope the subject, it is manifestly the doctrine of Scripture, that the cure of moral evil, and the deliverance of man from its ruin, required an interposition of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, more marvellous to men and angels than all the wonders of creation.

5. But it is chiefly on the Love of God, that the study of nature has never been able to satisfy the doubtful mind, nor to quiet the troubled and sorrowing soul. Experience shows, with what difficulty the mind is sometimes convinced, that, notwithstanding all the wrongs and ills of life, God is still Infinitely Good. When or where did man, from the study of himself or nature, assure himself of the truth that the Creator is Infinite Love, till it was enunciated by the Living Word,—till He, by Whom the worlds were made, came forth from the Bosom of the Father, and, in the fields and streets of Palestine, proclaimed the sublime truth of Eternal Love from God to man? Before His advent, Heaven had condescended to give, through inspiration, a solemn assurance of that Divine Goodness, which scepticism had questioned, and the pious had acknowledged with timidity. God's ways were said to be unequal. Under the burden of evil, men had cried out, "How shall we live?" The answers to these doubts are among the most remarkable passages of the Old Testament. "Are not my ways equal, are not your ways unequal?" Is there not something more than human in that Awful Oath, which is delivered to us as the Oath of the Almighty,—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"

(Ezek. xviii. and xxxiii.)? But the New Testament is the complete vindication of the Divine Goodness. Sorrow is consoled, impatience is rebuked, by the Sufferings of the Son of God. That men are perfected by suffering, and can glory even in tribulations, are common truths of Christianity.

The New Testament is no less distinct, in its agreement with the sure inferences of natural religion, on the Divine Equity. Nothing can be more positive than its assertions, that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34; Rom. ii. 11, &c.); that Jesus is "The Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. ii. 4; iv. 10, &c.), and therefore none can forfeit the highest gifts, but through their own fault; and that, as men have their various talents and degrees, so each will be responsible in his measure, and for no more than he was able to perform (St. Matt. xxv. 14—30; Rom. ii. 12; and the whole Bible).

Love is regarded by Scripture as an Essential and Eternal Affection of the Divine Nature. Man is but a creature of yesterday, yet he is loved with an Eternal Love, and predestined to Eternal Glory. This Love of God to man is both set forth as the example of the love which man is bound to return, and is itself a manifestation of a Higher and Internal Affection of the Divine Nature. The Son

of God is "the Beloved of the Father." "The Father loveth the Son" in Eternal Glory, according to the affecting language of Jesus Himself; when He prays that His Glory, and the Love wherewith the Father had loved Him before the foundation of the world, may be imparted to those whom He has loved, while present with them, and who are to wage the war against iniquity, when He shall be with them, in the Spirit, though unseen (St. John xvii. 5. 22—26).

Attention to this chapter of St. John must make it evident, that, if the language of man be of any value in conveying the Truth of God to man,—unless we are to take up the weak notion, that God cannot communicate with His creatures through that faculty of language which He has given them,—it is evident that Scripture speaks not only of the manifestations of Goodness in creation, but of that Divine Glory which is from everlasting to everlasting, when it announces that GOD IS LOVE.

The Trinity in Unity.

6. Revelation is in perfect accordance with reason on the Unity of the Deity. That there is One Great First Cause of all things, is the certain conclusion of natural theology. Revealed religion uniformly testifies to the truth, that "Jehovah is God, there is none else beside Him." This great doctrine of all religion is not inconsistent with

the revealed doctrine of the Three Persons in the One God. The difficulties and disputes which have arisen on this article of the Christian Faith, make it necessary to offer some observations, with a view to show, that the simple doctrine of Scripture is consistent with the Divine Unity, and that, though necessarily incomprehensible,—since the mystery of the Divine Nature is unsearchable,—yet it is, in no respect, inconsistent with reason; but rather consistent with it, as far as reason can go; and this too, when we take account of the latest results of thought.

The Divine Unity.

7. The doctrine of the Divine Unity, is closely connected with that of the Divine Infinity. Reason requires, for the foundation of its principles, an Absolute First Cause, of infinite attributes. It cannot admit two independent causes of the universe. It cannot conceive the possibility of two Infinite Beings. The God of Heaven reveals Himself to be that Absolute Being, without beginning, without end, without limit or restriction, of Whom man is ever in search, when guided by the light of nature, and the instincts of the soul.

The Holy Trinity.

8. But there is another principle of reason, which may lead it to anticipate some internal

distinctions or relations—human words can be but figurative—in the Nature of the First Cause of all. It is briefly expressed in the Equation of Hegel,—pure being and non-being are identical[1]. This equation undoubtedly *contains* an important truth. It signifies that reason can form no conception of pure and simple being, independent of all notion of relations; and that, whenever it attempts to form such a conception, it passes unavoidably to that of nonentity. We can form no conception of a simple, indivisible, isolated soul, existing without relation to other souls, or to a world around it; nor of a simple and self-sufficient monad or force, causing the existence of mind or matter, without connexion with other forces. It is only by intercourse with the world, that the mind comes into possession of its faculties. All immediate knowledge is of relations: in all experience, the subjective and the objective are combined in one thought, are discovered together, and cannot be separated; and if we attempt to strip any existing thing of those properties and qualities, which depend entirely on its relations to other things, nothing is left to be an object of thought; and the existence, as far as man is concerned, is resolved into nothing.

[1] Seyn = nichts.

It is true then that, *as far as reason can extend*, pure existence, without relation, is undistinguishable from non-existence. The equation of Hegel must be confined within the limits of knowledge: to carry it beyond them,—to give it a transcendental meaning, is to make the human faculties the measure of universal being.

It seems then, whatever be the Deep Nature of the Eternal, that it is more consistent with reason than the contrary, to anticipate that there must be certain internal relations or distinctions in the Divine Nature, though we may expect them to be wholly unknown. We can more easily approximate to the notion of an Infinite Being, by admitting unknown relations in His eternal Nature, than we can form a notion of pure existence without relations. The one notion is to man nonentity: the other is something unknown in its inward nature. Thus revelation is consistent with the highest results of reason, when it affirms there are certain distinctions in the Divine Nature, which it indicates by the human words,—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It need hardly be said that these words, and the word Person, and all other words, can be but partially applicable, and are infinitely inadequate to express the whole truth of the Divine Nature.

9. The Persons of the Godhead, though Three, are yet One, because there can be but One Infinite Being. There is nothing irrational in the doctrine. The common difficulty arises from the extension of reason beyond its province, and from the application to the Infinite of those principles of judgment, which we find to be true of the finite. Things finite are limited in time and space; finite minds in the extent and sphere of their powers, and consequently also in time and space. These limitations then distinguish one from another, as individuals of a plurality. The heathen, therefore, whose gods were beings of limited power and prescribed authority, consistently believed in a plurality of gods,—a god of heaven, a god of hell, a god of the sea, a god of war. But once admit that God is Infinite, and our principles of reason, which are competent to judge of the finite, and to carry us from the finite to the Infinite, become incompetent to understand the Internal Nature of the Deity. They can assure us that two finites are distinct, but cannot pronounce it irrational to say, that two Infinites are essentially One. It is well known to the mathematician that the common rules of numbers are inapplicable to Infinites: it is no less conceivable, that there may be internal relations in the Unknown Essence of the Deity, which may be

partially and distantly represented by the human distinction of personality, though quite incomprehensible to us, yet these distinctions be compatible with the Divine Unity.

Once acknowledge the sublime and simple Truth, that God is a Being of Eternal and Infinite Essence, "Which was, and is, and is to come;" confess likewise the Necessary Attributes of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; and it follows that, whatever be the internal relations of the Divine Essence, the Persons of the Godhead, each possessing the same Infinite Attributes, cannot be essentially distinct from one another. All we can pretend to say is this, that the Divine Persons are not Three, in the same sense in which they are One.

Arians, Sabellians, and Orthodox.

10. Disputes upon this, as on most other doctrines, have generally arisen either from ambiguities of language, or from dogmatism on things unknown. According to Dr. Hampden[2], they have, in the present case, originated in vain attempts to define, in what particular sense the Divine Persons are One, and in what sense they are Three. The Arian, it appears, asserted a unity of thought, will, and action in the Three

[2] Bampton Lectures, iii.

Persons, and made them of One Divine Nature, in the same sense in which all men are of one human nature. The Sabellian destroyed the distinction of number in the Persons of the Trinity, and left only a distinction of names; making the Three Persons to be One and the Same, under a different form or manifestation. The Arian, in short, asserts a logical, the Sabellian a physical unity. What then is the doctrine of the Orthodox? In connexion with the others, we are informed, that they maintain a unity both logical and physical. The reader may perhaps be led to conclude, since the argument of the Lectures is directed against dogmatism, that, in comparison of Arians and Sabellians, the Orthodox are doubly in error, because they dogmatically assert as much as both of them put together.

With a view to obviate difficulties, and to reconcile all parties, a new exposition is proposed. The Divine Unity "we understand numerically. But is this a just notion?" On the contrary, it is stated, in answer to this question, that the declaration of Moses,—"The Lord our God is one Lord,"—was a declaration that Jehovah is not that host of heaven, the objects of heathen worship, but the God in heaven, in earth, in sea; not the Teraphim of domestic worship, but the Universal Governor; that it is not meant to convey a

speculative notion of the Oneness of the Deity, but *practically*, no other than the command,—"Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

Doctrinal speculation.

11. The evils of speculation and dogmatism on things unknown are as obvious to-day, as in the whole history of the Church. There can be little doubt that Arians, Sabellians, and Orthodox have often carried their speculations beyond all reason. But although it must be admitted, that the relations and distinctions of numbers cannot be applied, by human reason, to the Infinite; yet the statements of Scripture must be received, in their full and simple signification. If words can be made the vehicle of truth from God to man, it is a real objective truth, that God is One. To oppugn the speculations of others, and then question whether the Divine Unity should be understood numerically, must be to speculate as deeply as any of them. The numerous Scriptures which assert the Unity of the Deity, would generally be understood by the unlearned to signify a numerical unity. Indeed any one but a metaphysician would be much puzzled to know, in what way unity can be other than numerical. The word One conveys a definite sense to the many, who have never learnt to draw distinctions between a logical and a physical unity, nor to understand the meaning of

a unity, which is not numerical; and Holy Scripture addresses itself to such as these, when it declares,—There is but One God. They will understand the words to mean One Existing Being, and will think it speculative to give them any other signification.

Importance of the doctrine.

12. These observations cannot be thought unimportant to the subject of the present treatise. To unsettle the doctrine of the Divine Unity, must necessarily introduce confusion into the relations between natural and revealed religion. Natural religion establishes the truth of One Infinite Being, and requires that polytheism, in every sense, be excluded from the conception. Unless the Divine Persons be One Being in the Infinite Unity, they are like the gods of the heathen, of limited existence and power. The Scripture doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, apart from human speculations, is not inconsistent with that of the Divine Unity. It leaves the great truth of monotheism in its simple signification.

The doctrine is above reason, not contrary to it. It is out of the sphere of human speculation. Of finite beings, it would be contradictory to say that three are one. Of Infinite Beings, no such contradiction can be affirmed. In what sense the

Divine Persons are Three, in what sense they are One, are mysteries of the Infinite beyond our knowledge. The Internal Nature of the Deity, the relations of the Divine Persons, cannot but be incomprehensible. But though unknown in their Eternity, the Persons of the Godhead become known in their relations to mankind; and their coeternal Deity is the foundation of revealed religion. The Son of the Father is the "God and Saviour" of mankind; the Holy Spirit is "the Lord God, Who dwells among them."

CHAPTER III.

ON MIRACLES, AND THEIR RELATIONS TO THE DIVINE WISDOM.

1. THE relation of the Laws of Nature to the Agency of the Creator, is a subject which includes many difficult questions of natural theology; some of them quite beyond the sphere of knowledge, although sometimes discussed and decided in a confused and superficial manner. Such questions are, that already noticed between completed and continued creation; that of miracles, considered as interruptions of the laws of nature; the revealed doctrines of a particular Providence, and a God Who answers prayer in a world governed by these natural laws; and generally all questions between Naturalism and Supernaturalism.

The Positive Philosophy.

2. The religious scepticism which is founded on the laws of nature, has of late been pressed to the extreme, and exhibited in its full absurdity in

"The Positive Philosophy." Its observations on the relations of law and mind, are an example of that groundless assumption and assertion so common with it on these subjects. "The notion that phænomena proceed from a Supernatural Will," we read, "is the same thing as calling them variable[1]." That is, because the will of man seldom attains to a perfectly calm, consistent, invariable course of action; or, perhaps, because its agency is necessarily discontinuous, being interrupted by sleep, and passing from one action to another without obvious connexion, we are therefore to regard this human inconsistency and discontinuity as an essential property of mind. We are to assume that no intelligent agency can be free from it; or that a being who acts with intelligent design is to be classed, not with mind, but with matter, unless his action be wavering and inconstant, like that of man. It might have been seen, on a moment's thought, that the more a man's spiritual nature is cultivated, the less variable, the more consistent in conduct and principle he becomes. It would be strange to conclude him to be less a living and intelligent being than he was before, because a long life of virtuous endeavour has been continually raising him above that

[1] Vol. i. p. 223.

variableness which is so common to the unformed mind, and bringing him constantly nearer to the Image of that Perfect Mind, Which changes not.

The opening chapter of the book quietly assumes it to be "the law of human progress," that "each branch of our knowledge passes successively through three different theoretical conditions; the theological or fictitious, the metaphysical or abstract, and the scientific or positive." This "progress" of the general mind of man is illustrated, we read, by that of the individual mind. "Each of us is aware, if he looks back on his own history, that he was a theologian in his childhood, a metaphysician in his youth, and a natural philosopher in his manhood. All men who are up to their age can verify this for themselves."

That many men are able to verify this for themselves will not be questioned. It may be more than questioned, whether this is any evidence that they are "up to their age." There are also many, and they have not been the least eminent examples of human advancement, either in intelligence or in goodness, who retain the theological form of knowledge, along with the abstract and the scientific, to the end of their days; and are accustomed to regard this course, from the theologian of childhood to the atheist of old age, as one of any thing rather than progress. Holy Scripture has words on

babes and children, which support them in their perverse opinion. We have seen that natural religion agrees with Scripture, and possibly the advocates of this "philosophy" may confirm them in their prejudice.

For certainly it deserves notice, that a celebrated book, which identifies the theological with the fictitious, and appeals to experience for support, holds it for a fundamental principle, that to be variable is the highest characteristic of will. It is quite true that they who passed through the theological form of knowledge in their childhood, and have come to regard it, in their old age, as fictitious, will generally find that the will has not grown more settled and consistent as life advanced. It is no new thing, when this is the case, for men to find in their age that they have no belief in God, and have grown into a conviction, which few, however, venture to express with so much assurance, that the theological is the same as the fictitious.

The same opposition between will and law occurs in connexion with a passage already quoted. "If the consideration of man is to prevail over that of the universe, all phænomena are inevitably attributed to *will*,—first natural, and then outside of nature; and this constitutes the theological system. On the contrary, the direct study of the universe

suggests and developes the great idea of the *laws* of nature[2]." Little need be added to what has been said on this topic. The book anticipates the time when philosophy shall be perfect, and the two methods—the theological and the positive, shall be reconciled. In fact, they have always been reconciled in the true theological method, which finds no opposition between will and law. On the contrary, law is the rule of an immutable Will. It is mere assumption, without even a plausible ground, to represent them as opposite and incompatible notions. It can need no demonstration, that the Infinite may conduct the phænomena of nature by unfailing powers and invariable laws.

Present Agency of God.

3. But the ordinary questions on the relations of law to mind are more difficult, and some of the sceptical inferences from them less obviously absurd. A few observations on these questions, and especially on the relations between the mind of man and a revelation by miracles, will not be out of place.

The legitimate conclusions of reason on the present agency of the Creator in nature, have been already indicated. Natural religion may regard the creation, either as finished in the first Fiat of

[2] Vol. i. p. 356.

creative Power, and thenceforward governed by a plastic nature within itself, or as in perpetual dependence on the Almighty. On either supposition, it is essential to any conception of the Infinite, that the first plan of the Creator, the first word of Creation, contained within it, virtually or actually[3], all the powers of future being. But few minds can be satisfied with the notion of an existence wholly independent of the Self-existing Being. It is more congenial to the reason, to regard the agency of the Creator as essential to the preservation, as well as to the first creation of all things. Both in the mind and in nature itself, there are indications that no development of being has been effected without the Present God. The mind cannot but regard the Infinite Being as superior to all conditions of time, and as present in all time. And those admirable arrangements and adjustments of the universe, which have resulted from material properties and forces that have been in action for ages of ages, yet are as exact and perfect in the present constitution of things, as if they were directed by the immediate agency of the Almighty, —these manifestations of present Wisdom in the natural processes of ages past, look like an approximation of material nature to the truth,

[3] If the distinction be applicable to the Divine Agency at all.

that Eternity is one present to the Supreme Being.

But Holy Scripture recognises the Divine Presence in every phænomenon. It discovers not only that all things were made by God, but that "in Him we live and move and have our being." He is the ever-present Spirit, Who feeds the ravens, and so clothes the lilies of the field, that "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Eternal purposes.

4. In all the spaces and durations of creation, the Divine plan may be known to be One, and His purpose immutable. He is too Great to have to change His intentions, or mend His first work, or interfere for the conservation of His universe, by occasional expedients not included in its eternal plan. Changes and diversities are apparent upon the surface of the world; disorder may seem in particular time and place to be predominant, war may be waged between good and evil; but God has "declared the end from the beginning," and all things will work for the accomplishment of His Purpose.

No difficulty need arise upon this truth from such Scriptural expressions as "it repented God." They are sometimes said to be metaphorical, and to have no literal application. Perhaps it would

be more correct, to consider them as relational. The Divine conduct can be seen by man only from his human point of view. As the works of God are subject to conditions of time and change, so His affections to His creatures can only be viewed under the same conditions. The word *repent* cannot, in this application, include the human meaning of a wish that something had been left undone. It implies that the conduct of the creature has changed his relations to the Creator.

Revelation discovers that there is an eternal unity of plan in the Moral Dealings of God with His creatures, no less than in the material world. The natural laws of creation are known to have continued the same in all ages of the globe. In revelation we read of the Eternal Purpose of God, to redeem His elect to the inheritance of a kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world; and of the eternal purpose, "to gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven and which are in earth" (Eph. i. 10; iii. 9—11). Thus the view of the Divine conduct in Grace, which was long since given by revelation, agrees with that view of the Divine conduct in nature, which has been but recently developed. The Scriptural doctrine of the Divine immutability of purpose is confirmed by the evident adaptation of the world, after so many epochs and changes, to

the temporary existence of moral agents: and the vast Plan of nature is subordinate to that greater plan, in which the righteous are eternally predestined to be called to the kingdom of Eternal Glory.

Thus the two majestic plans of nature and of grace unite in One, to declare the Immutability of the Lord of all; and, with the chorus of innumerable tongues of creatures in heaven and earth, roll down along countless ages the sublime song of the inspired psalmist of Israel:—"Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy Years shall have no end." (Ps. cii.)

Natural miracles.

5. Thus, though all nature is full of God, we can be no less certain that the rich resources of Infinite Power are not all lavished upon the nature which we see. No figment of the imagination can be more empty, than the notion that the faculties and the experience of a creature of yesterday, must either comprehend in fact, or, in the nature of things, be capable of comprehending, either the deep processes of the nature which is before our

eyes, or the Infinite and Eternal Agency of the Omnipotent. We have no faculties for understanding His present and abiding agency in nature; since we cannot ascertain the ultimate conditions of being, which belong to the simplest existing thing. We do not need to go backward in time from present phænomena to first causes, before we arrive at the Incomprehensible. Every thing is incomprehensible in present time. The popular lines are true of the physical world, no less than of the ways of Providence:—

> "God works in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform."

And it is evident that the nature which is known to us is but a part of the Divine Ways. Even common observation discovers that events happen, from time to time, which cannot be included in the known course of nature. We may again appeal to Geology and Astronomy. The former science furnishes evidences, in the changes, both of the globe itself, and of its successive living creatures, that the course of nature has not always been what it is now. There was certainly a time when the world was without living inhabitants. And man's existence on the globe is comparatively recent. There appears also to be good evidence that the course of things has not been continuous, but has been repeatedly broken by catastrophes

and revolutions, which are thought by some naturalists to have been so universal, as to have effected total changes in the species of animals which inhabited the earth. But however this be, for it is a secondary question,—even if it could be shown that there is a progressive development of life in the world,—if any one choose to call it a course of nature, which has evolved from the primæval fire the present world of life and love, of thought and beauty, he must, at all events, extend the signification of the word *nature* to something beyond those ordinary processes, which we now regard as natural laws. No known process of nature has any such tendency.

Astronomy leads to a similar conclusion. The stability and order of its myriads of suns are proverbial. The stars and constellations are still the same, from night to night, as were observed by the Chaldean shepherds. Experience is here far more constant and trustworthy, than any common experience of human life. Yet it is known to be not universal. Occasionally a new star has appeared in the heavens, sometimes one so bright as to be seen at midday, and after continuing visible for some time, has died away again and disappeared. A star of this kind was discovered but five years ago [4], which was large enough to be for some

[4] Written in 1853.

months visible to the naked eye, when it gradually diminished in brightness till it was lost to the knowledge of man.

Thus Geology and Astronomy may be said, in some sense, to have their miracles, and afford instructive opportunities for the application of Hume's celebrated canon;—"It is more improbable that miracles should be true, than that the testimony should be false." Nothing can be more unfounded and irrational, than to assume that all things which are or can be, must fall within the measure of the finite understanding of man. As well might a blind man assume that, through the senses he possesses, he gains all possible knowledge of sensation. Nature runs out beyond our line in every direction. Experience and reason may discover, at the commencement and at the end of knowledge, the wisdom of the patriarch's confession;—"Lo these are parts of His Ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? The thunder of His Power who can understand?"

Origin of life.

6. That the world is subject to laws of wonderful constancy, which have continued the same from its earliest periods, is a certain truth of science. These laws prove, not that matter is independent of mind, but that the Mind Which orders it is immutable. Still, it is a question of science,

whether these laws, though continually the same, have not been subject to occasional temporary suspension. If it be true that there are distinct groups of fossil remains completely independent, it will follow that even the physical theory of the earth cannot be included in one course of nature, continuous, in law and process, with the nature which is known. The further question will then arise;—May not all the known laws of nature,—the physical laws of the earth and stars, be subordinate to some higher and more comprehensive natural laws, related, it may be, to such sidereal phænomena as the proper motions of the sun and stars, and including in their causal connexion, and not as mere occasional interferences or exceptions, the revolutions of geology, the appearances of temporary stars, and other phænomena, which, to our limited knowledge, appear as accidental or temporary?

The question of the origin of life in the world is of the same kind. "We are led by analogy," Sir John Herschel writes on this question, "to suppose that in the replacement of the extinct species of geology by others, the Creator operates through a series of intermediate causes, and that, in consequence, the origination of fresh species, could it ever come under our cognizance, would be found to be a natural, in contradistinction to a miracu-

lous process, although we perceive no indication of any process actually in progress, which is likely to issue in such a result[5]." This, as we may be sure from its author, is written in the spirit of a philosopher, and may be contrasted with the weak assumptions, which represent laws as incompatible with mind. Suppose then it were established, that laws of nature extend to the origination of living species, as well as to their continuance; suppose it were ascertained, that there is a continuity of law and force between the developments of matter, and those of vegetable and animal life; and that matter and electricity, and the other dead forces of nature, possess the power of evolving life under the requisite conditions; what would be the theological effect of this conclusion? Nothing more than this,—to give us an enlarged knowledge of the laws of nature, and to alter our definition of material substance. We should learn that there is a higher energy of Divine Power in the existence of matter, than we have hitherto perceived, but the mystery of the Divine agency would remain as far beyond us as before.

If it could be ascertained for certain, that there is a continuity of law and force from the existence of matter to that of living beings, whether vege-

[5] "The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise," Appendix i.

table, animal, or intelligent; yet it would not follow that the Divine Agency in creation is the same in all, nor would it be known how it passes from one to another. Man's knowledge of existence, whether of matter or of life, is altogether imperfect, partial, inadequate. He can never reach its fundamental principle. He cannot tell that any *single thing exists* independently of Divine agency, nor how its existence is prolonged; and it must therefore be impossible to know whether there is any special agency, or what it is, which connects one form of existence with another. It is probable that those phænomena of nature which appear isolated and accidental, are connected by some law above our knowledge. But while we are in total ignorance of the manner in which Divine Power acts, in the ordinary and obvious laws of nature; it must be futile to inquire into its manner of action, in laws which are beyond our sight.

Miracles.

7. Another important question, connected with this subject, is one more closely related to the evidences of revealed religion. It is that of Miracles in their relation both to the laws of nature, and to the Agency of God. It is evident that those events which we regard as miraculous, because they are not included in the common course of nature which falls within our cognizance, may be parts of

a higher nature, which may be directed according to still more comprehensive laws. These laws are necessarily unknown to us, because we are acquainted with but a few isolated phænomena of their action.

This, no doubt, is an admissible supposition: and when nothing more is intended by those who deny the possibility of miracles, no reasonable objection can be made to their opinion. In fact, it may be a mere question of words, whether or no we are to include the Whole Agency of the Creator, unknown as well as known, under the term *Nature*. The only objection would be, that this is not the ordinary signification of the word. Thus there can be no objection to the statement of Spinoza, that "it is most irrational to imagine that God created nature so impotent, and gave it laws so barren, as to be obliged to interfere with its course, to make things turn out according to His Will[6]." This may be all very true, at least when we take account of a remark which precedes[7], to the effect that by *nature* he means not only matter and its affections, but besides matter infinite other forms of being. But the case is very much altered, when he pretends to account for the

[6] Tract. Theol.-Pol. cap. vi. § 12.

[7] Ib. § 10, marginal note.

long day of Joshua [8] by the ice which abounded in the atmosphere (referring to Joshua x. 11), and to find the natural cause of the Egyptian boils in the ashes sprinkled towards heaven, and that of the recovery of sight to the blind (St. John ix.) in the clay. This is bringing the infinite other forms of being within the ordinary and known laws of nature.

All laws dependent on God.

8. But even when it is admitted that the Divine agency is always ordered according to fixed laws, which may be called laws of nature, it is a great mistake to take for granted that these laws are either independent of the Deity, or unfit to authenticate a special revelation of His Will. On the contrary, we are bound by the arguments of theism, to regard the Supreme Being as the Originator of all the laws of every course of nature, whether within our observation or above it. So that it is no less a miracle, when the lower law of nature is modified by the higher law, at the exact time at which it pleases God to make a revelation of His Will, than if the nature which is known to us were modified by His immediate interference. Thus, to illustrate by the calculating engine of Mr. Babbage [9], it is no less a proof of knowledge

[8] Ib. cap. ii. § 27.

[9] See "Ninth Bridgewater Treatise."

and of power superior to the engine itself, to predict that a law which has held good for a million and one instances will change at the million and second, than to be able to produce such a change, by interfering with the movements of the machine.

Suppose it granted that the standing of the sun, in the time of Joshua, was a phænomenon of a law, superior to the ordinary laws of nature which are known to man, and including these laws as subordinate; still it is no less a proof of Divine Power, and no less an evidence of special revelation, to have ordained the laws of universal nature in such a way, that the exception to the common laws should take place at the time it did, than if the visible change were effected by immediate interposition. And, after all, it is impossible to ascribe the knowledge of Joshua that the sun and moon would obey so extraordinary a command, to any thing less than an immediate revelation from heaven.

Anti-supernaturalism.

9. These observations apply to many of the pretended explanations of Scripture miracles, with which recent anti-supernaturalists, following the example of Spinoza, have perplexed themselves and others. It is not difficult to see the weakness of philosophical anti-supernaturalism, or that pretended philosophy which considers all miracles

incredible and impossible. If, on such a system, it is intended to deny that any thing can happen contrary to the laws of *universal nature*, the denial is a mere truism, and on the question of miracles is without meaning. Universal nature mounts ultimately to the Universal Agency of the Creator. But if it be maintained that all events which can possibly be discovered to man, must necessarily be included within the common laws of nature which are known to him; and if it be attempted, on this supposition, to explain the miracles of Scripture by known laws and causes; it is manifest that the scheme is founded on the absurd assumption, that man's faculties and means of knowledge are necessarily equal to the comprehension of all things which are or can be.

Hence we may understand the question of the fitness of miracles, to authenticate a Divine revelation to the world. Precisely as the laws of nature discover to us the ordinary operation of the Almighty, so may occasional violations of the laws manifest the presence of One Superior to nature, and be the credentials of a special communication.

It is here of great consequence to have correct notions of the Power and Wisdom of God, on account of the close relation of the question to the fundamental principles of Christian Evidences. The point is one which has, of late years, often led

to discussion, and has lain at the foundation of some remarkable phases of infidelity.

Arguments of Mr. Blanco White.

10. It was treated with much closeness of reasoning by the late Mr. Blanco White[1], and, it cannot be questioned, with perfect sincerity. But, to speak with respect, is there not a great mistake at the foundation of his arguments? He treats the question between supernaturalism and rationalism, as if it were one between sensation and reason; whereas all religious supernaturalism is founded both upon sensation and reason. He says:—

"With a truly infantine ignorance of man's mental constitution, people continue to imagine, that no belief can exceed in certainty that which would arise from hearing God Himself make a verbal statement of what He wished mankind to hold as unquestionably true. But there is a monstrous misconception at the bottom of this notion; for does it not suppose that God may make Himself an object of which our senses may judge? God, I doubt not, can do all things, except what is in contradiction with Himself: it is He that has made our senses in such a manner that they can receive only certain kinds of impressions,—impressions

[1] In Mr. Martineau's "Rationale;" Appendix.

essentially distinct from every thing mental or spiritual. The supposition then that He would resort to such a medium for a more immediate and more secure communication with man, implies a charge of ignorance of His Own works in the great Creator. 'God is a Spirit,' is the sublime fundamental principle of Christ's religion. Man too is in part a spirit. . . ." And so he goes on to argue that the communication between God and man would naturally be expected to be spiritual. But this could only be apprehended by the reason, which "is said to be too weak, too much exposed to error and delusion." "How shall this difficulty be obviated? How shall God remove uncertainty from His most particular and important communications with man? Let God be seen and heard, answers the supernaturalist."

Revelation appeals to reason.

11. His objection to this answer proceeds on the assumption that the supernaturalist, by his appeal to miracles, puts himself under the guidance of sense alone. But this appeal to the senses does not exclude any possible application of reason, or any other possible means of knowledge. Undoubtedly God is a Spirit; and man is, in part, a spirit. But then man is not wholly a spirit, and he is the work of God, both in his mind and in his senses. Instead of inferring that the

communication between God and man will be spiritual, or through the reason of man; we ought rather to expect that He will reveal Himself through all the inlets of knowledge which He has given him; and that His extraordinary revelations will be authenticated by evidences at least as full and complete, as the ordinary manifestations of His Being and Power. This becomes the more certain, when we consider, what has been made sufficiently evident in the former part, that no single faculty of man, neither reason nor sense, considered by itself, can either be developed into action, or find a door of access from the internal thought to external being. It is not by reason or feeling alone, that man becomes assured of the truth that God exists, but by the combined action of all his faculties, and in communication with the world without. A discovery of the Divine Existence to reason or feeling alone,—and the two would be undistinguishable—would manifestly be "exposed to error and delusion." How then is this danger obviated in the ordinary revelation of God? Manifestly by the concurrent testimony of all the faculties of knowledge. God is a Spirit, but His agency is discoverable in the world of sensation, and reason is the discoverer of His presence, even there. It may be expected that a special revelation will be authenticated in the

same way. We need not infer, as Mr. White puts the case, "that when a sound like that of the human voice cannot be traced to any man, it must, beyond all doubt, originate in God." Here, as before, reason must be the judge, and must decide upon the circumstances before it, with all its faculties of information.

This explanation may set at rest other notable difficulties of the same writer. One of them had so much weight with him that he says,—"I have examined this objection to the common theological notions on revelation and miracles, with the utmost impartiality and attention of which I am capable; I have done so for many years, under a desire of finding it fallacious; for the superstitious fears, inspired by my early education, were not easily subdued; but I never could discover even a plausible answer." His difficulty however appears to be no more than is easily obviated by what has gone before. According to "the immutable laws of the human understanding, the Eternal Source of those laws, if He intended to guide mankind by miracles (and verbal Revelation is of that class,) not by reason, must have intended two things: first, that the great mass of mankind in a low state of mental development, should follow the most extravagant dreams of enthusiasm and imposture: secondly, that in proportion as

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the human mind increased in knowledge, so it would reject the miraculous Divine guidance."

With respect to the first of these statements, there can be no doubt that men in a low state of mental development, are liable to be misled by the most extravagant impostures: but this can prove no more than that God does not change His laws, because men deprive themselves and their children of the faculties with which they were endowed. On the second, it is enough to observe, that the human mind, as it increased in knowledge, would not, on this account, reject miraculous Divine guidance, but would be better qualified to discriminate between true miracles and false pretensions.

Another difficulty of the same kind is founded on a passage[2] of the Law of Moses (Deut. xiii. 1—5), which enjoins the Israelites to put to death a prophet, who should work signs or wonders to lead them after other gods. This passage is thought to leave the Jews perfectly excusable in their rejection of the Messiah: "not even the clearest miracles could relieve them from a most distressing perplexity. The Jew was bound to continue what he was in regard to religion, even if heaven and earth obeyed the voice of a reform-

[2] Noticed also by Spinoza. Tract. Theol.-Pol. cap. vi.

ing prophet: he would not be moved at such signs, for he had the highest authority to believe, that *the Lord his God was proving Him.*"

The Mission of the Messiah was, without doubt, a severe probation to the Jews; and it can hardly fall within human judgment, to decide what form of probation is consistent with the Divine Equity. Moral probation then does not depend on the senses alone, since its purpose is not to prove the strength of an unfounded, unreasonable obstinacy. It must call into action the intellectual and moral nature. It was for the Jews to judge, by all the means in their power, not between the Lord and other gods, as in the case instanced by Moses, but whether Jesus were not Himself the Lord. They were bound to employ their reason upon all the evidences they possessed, both in His miracles and in their Scriptures, to ascertain whether or no Jesus of Nazareth were He, "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write."

Death before the fall.

12. Some of the inconsistencies which have been supposed to divide Science from Revelation, depend on similar difficulties in the question of the Divine agency by general laws. One of these arises from the geological fact, that death was in the world, long before the existence of man. How is this to be reconciled with the doctrine of

Scripture, that sin brought death into the world? But it must not be hastily assumed that that which is first in time, is therefore first in the Divine Purpose. We have no warrant for supposing that the universe of mind and matter is bound in one unbroken chain of physical causes, and cannot know what is the connexion between sin and death. But it would appear improbable that the plan of Infinite Wisdom in the creation would need to be changed, that its purpose might not be thwarted by the wayward will of man. Even reason would seem almost to expect, that the world would be adapted to the permanent condition of the human race, and not to a state of innocence, which it was foreknown would not continue.

Providence and prayer.

13. A more important question is that of a Special Providence, which includes that of Prayer. How are these Christian doctrines compatible with the uniformity of the laws of nature? How can God care for us individually, when all things are bound in unerring laws? How can He hear and answer occasional prayers, unless His agency be occasional.

The difficulty of these questions generally arises from defective conceptions of Infinite Wisdom. None but atheists can consistently join in

that superficial ridicule of public prayer and thanksgiving, which are so common. Between the inflexible laws of nature, and a Providence who answers prayer, *there is no inconsistency of opposite doctrines;* but only an incompetency of the human understanding, to know how they coexist. There is no inconsistency, unless it be assumed that the answer to prayer cannot be given, but through change of the Divine plans. But God is superior to nature, eternally and infinitely superior. He is the Creator of nature, and has made it perfectly to fulfil its ends. He has prepared the world for the habitation of man, through innumerable causes, which have co-operated during long ages. Natural laws and causes have been perfectly adapted and adjusted, during the immense ages of the past, yet combine as skilfully to provide for the present wants of the world's inhabitants, as if they took counsel together for this immediate purpose. So that a particular providence is, after all, nothing different, except in extent, from a general providence. The general providence for the wants of mankind is a subordinate manifestation of the universal laws of nature, which have prevailed during ages past. The particular is subordinate, in the same way, to the general providence. As the universal laws of all time have evolved the one, so its general laws

in the present time may evolve the other. The natural processes of geology have established the course of the world; this may extend itself, in like manner, to particular instances.

The Divine agency need not be occasional, to answer occasional prayers, because Infinite Wisdom takes account of all occasional events of finite wills, in the foundation of its eternal plans. Hence the Almighty does not contravene the laws of nature; He can answer prayer consistently with them, and by means of them. All the changes of endless time were spread before Him in the first constitution of things. That Vast Plan took account of all the revolutions of the material world, and all the movements of the capricious wills of men, and contained provision for every particular emergency. It included an answer to every true prayer.

The Abiding Presence of God.

14. This view is not inconsistent with the Abiding Presence of the Creator. It has reference only to the Divine purpose, not to the manner of its execution in nature: and the questions are wholly distinct. The laws of nature may either be conceived to be connexions of powers which exist independently, through the first Fiat of creation; or the order of the immediate Divine agency. We have found reason to hold, that

there is a present agency of the Creator in all finite existence; and therefore, though we have spoken of the First Creative Purpose, as if it were something past, this is only from the imperfection of human language and modes of thought. The First Purpose of the Infinite is, in fact, His Eternal Purpose. We have seen that there is nothing unreasonable in considering it to extend to particular determinations, and to answer prayers. Of the manner of its execution we know nothing. We cannot trace the connexion between our own minds and the outward world, much less approach the unsearchable problem,—How the Ideas of the Divine Mind pass forth to realise themselves in creation. To understand the relation between laws of nature and a particular providence, we must have comprehended that between the time of man and the Eternity of God;—one of the things which pass knowledge.

Scriptural doctrine.

15. The Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, confirm that view of the Divine Wisdom, according to which its particular determinations are included in its eternal purpose. Thus in the New Testament, as in the whole Bible, admission to the kingdom of heaven is conditional on prayer. And yet it is stated in many passages, that the members of that kingdom are

chosen before the foundation of the world, and predestinated according to the eternal purpose of God. These doctrines of prayer and predestination are still often regarded as inconsistent, and by many Christians are not reconciled but by explaining away either the moral agency of man or the Sovereignty of the Creator. At first sight, they will generally appear to be incompatible; but cease to be so to those who have laid aside false notions of Infinite Wisdom. It deserves consideration, whether this be not an internal testimony to the inspiration of the Sacred Writers.

CHAPTER IV.

MODERN INFIDELITY AND ITS CLAIM TO SIT IN JUDGMENT UPON GOD.

1. It has been already observed that mankind are much indebted to the Sacred Scriptures, for their knowledge of the Moral Attributes of the Creator. This is admitted to be true, even by writers who assume to sit in judgment upon the contents of Revelation, and to reject whatever they may think inconsistent with their rational conceptions of the Divine Attributes[1]. They derive their highest knowledge of the Divine Character from the Inspired Writers; yet profess to be wiser than their teachers, on the very truths which they would

[1] Thus Mr. Hennell has,—"Jesus Christ has added to philosophy the principle of regarding the Supreme Mind as an object of the affections." (Christian Theism, ed. 2, p. 45.) And Mr. Parker,—"The greatest minds, the richest hearts have set no loftier aim, no truer method than Jesus', of perfect Love to God and man." (Discourse, p. 222.)

never have known without them. They have learnt from the Scriptures that God is Love, yet find the statements of the same Scriptures concerning the Love of God, to be inconsistent with right notions of the Supreme Being. They can all see this religion to be erroneous on the very doctrines, of which it alone has been the outward teacher; though their judgment rests upon an inward conception of the Infinite Being, which, without this teacher, they would never have attained. Thus, with loud anticipations of success, the deist joins hands with the atheist, in the attempt to set up a counter-theory.

Secularism.

2. It is the aim of modern atheism to dissever religion from common life, and to represent it as concerned about the happiness of an uncertain life to come, to the neglect of all the duties and interests of the life present and known. These, it seems, are henceforth to fall under the name of *Secularism*. This convenient word is to stand for the practical and useful departments of positive philosophy, and to afford a unity of name and purpose to all who may wish to serve the world by useful pursuits, without regard to religion.

Most Christians will consider it a truism, that religion aims to secure the happiness of a life beyond death, not through neglect of the best

duties and interests of the present, but by means of them. Religion includes secularism: secularism, so-called, is only the negation of the cherished hopes, the high aims, the powerful motives, which religion furnishes as means of secular improvement. The religion of Christ does not countenance the separation of present duties from eternal hopes. It is misunderstood by infidels, and traduced by its professors, when it is represented as unfavourable to any useful pursuit, or opposed to any development of the powers and resources of humanity. It is not realised, if it fail to enforce the common duties of public and private life, or to advance whatever tends to the material strength, the intellectual greatness, the moral improvement, the general happiness of mankind. Christianity, with its doctrine of God within us, fosters every good disposition and encourages every useful pursuit, by consecrating them, and regarding them as duties, not only to men but to the Lord.

All religion is founded on the assumption that life is a state of trial preparatory to a future life. This truth implies that the preparation for eternity consists not in neglecting the duties of time, but in performing them well. Moreover the advancement of science and civilization increases the opportunities and talents of men as accountable beings, and makes them capable of a higher

religious development. True religion will therefore aim at secular improvement, that mankind may be in a higher position as moral agents. With this view, it will seek to draw out the intellectual and moral powers of the race, to establish their freedom, to meliorate their outward circumstances. Such will be its aim, and such also is its natural tendency. In proportion as it has flourished, the secular condition of the race has been improved. It is irreligion which has lowered it in all ages from the Fall of man. The pretensions of atheistic secularism would be tested, if it were to take in hand a tribe of savages, and compete with Christian Missions in the work of civilization. But atheism will direct its philanthropic efforts to the heathen at its own doors. It wisely avoids the savage tribes, for it has been among them in ages past, and has finished its work. Secularism has made them what they are. There is still a sphere open to it at home, for our heathen are not yet degenerated to barbarism. They must receive more implicitly, and realise for a few generations, the pregnant maxim, that they should live for the present, because they will die like brutes; before they will give the world another instance of a tribe degraded to the brutes. Unhappily when the mischief has been done, the darkened understanding can no longer detect the imposture.

3. In this visionary scheme, atheism joins hands with deism,—the system or systems, which acknowledge the Supreme Being, and, sometimes, also the religious nature and hopes of man, but do not see that Revelation has been necessary, to rescue the human race from these miserable consequences of speculative and practical atheism. Christianity has raised the deist above the condition of the savage, yet he thinks he can supersede it with something better.

In considering some recent criticisms on revealed religion, which are in fact objections to the scripture revelations of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, we shall frequently meet with the question, how far the faculties of man are competent to pronounce judgment on the Moral Perfections of the Creator.

There can be no question that man is dependent upon his faculties for whatever knowledge he can possess, natural or revealed. It is only through the mental powers that he is able to understand the language of nature, or to find a meaning in revelation. Reason must also be called in to establish the evidences of revelation; and, consequently, the known authority of revealed religion cannot exceed that of the natural powers, and must be commensurate with the veracity of reason. Not that religion can be inferred to be a delusion, be-

cause it may not have been established by examination and reflection. If the Bible be inspired, it is probable that it will carry its own evidences to the mind of the sincere, though unlearned, inquirer. But this spiritual perception is beyond the province of reflective knowledge and inquiry.

Mr. Newman on the moral judgment.

4. It must be admitted that "man is finite, tied down within his sphere, limited by his limited faculties," and consequently that "no higher arbiter of truth is accessible to man than the mind of man[2]." But this fundamental truth, that the faculties of the mind are our only means or inlets of knowledge, does not imply that they must be capable of universal knowledge. Indeed, it is the very opposite of such a notion. Yet this obvious truth is sometimes overlooked; as when it is argued, that because the advocates of Christianity often appeal to conscience to judge of the internal evidences of revelation, they are therefore precluded from removing any of its doctrines out of the sphere of the moral judgment. Thus, in the writer just quoted,—"It is highly popular to set forth the excellence of *a great deal* in the Bible to which *our consciences bear witness*, and then deduce that all persons are wicked who deny the authority

[2] "The Soul," by Mr. Newman, p. 3, 3rd ed.

and infallibility of the book[3]." Mr. Newman maintains that if Conscience be a competent judge of a great deal, it is competent to judge of the whole. As well might it be argued that we ought to lay aside the use of reason, because there are questions which transcend reason. The gift of a revelation implies that man is unable, by reason or conscience, to guide himself in matters of the deepest moment. The Bible may therefore be expected to contain truths beyond the reach of reason. But since the faculties of the mind are, no less than revelation, the gifts of a Good Creator, it becomes a duty to examine the limits of their application, that they may distinguish what is within their sphere, from what lies beyond it. They can never, unless through mistake, "come into collision with the Bible."

The importance of defining how far our faculties are competent to judge of the Attributes of the Creator will be evident from the following passage of Mr. Newman's[4]:—Assuming that before the Bible can have any authority, "we must have independent means of knowing that God knows the truth, and is disposed to tell it to us," he goes on to argue that if we know thus much of God, independently of the Bible, "we obviously know a great

[3] Ib. p. 41.

[4] Ib. p. 40.

deal more also. We know not only the existence of God, but much concerning His Character. For only by discovering that He has virtues, similar in kind to human virtues, do we know of His Truthfulness and Goodness." . . . "The nature of the case implies, that the human mind is competent to sit in *moral* and *spiritual* judgment on a professed revelation; and to decide, if the case seem to require it, in the following tone: 'This doctrine attributes to God that which we should all call harsh, cruel, or unjust in man; it is therefore intrinsically inadmissible: for if God may be what we should call *cruel*, He may equally well be what we should call *false*, and if so, of what use is His Word to us?'"

Some brief observations will be made with a view towards defining the limits of knowledge in this direction.

Limits of the moral judgment.

5. The natural faculties are able to discover that the First Cause of all things is an Intelligent Mind and a Living God. His Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness imply that it is impossible He can be cruel or untruthful. He is necessarily omniscient, and is too great to be the Author of confusion in His own works. His dealings with man will be in accordance with the powers of man's nature, and His dispensations such as to meet the

soul's wants. He cannot but act in conformity with that Law of Universal Order, which has its eternal residence in Himself. And we have some knowledge of this law, but not a perfect knowledge.

We have some knowledge of it. We can often be sure of the distinction between right and wrong, between good and evil. Conscience has a natural preference for virtue and benevolence, and gives us some acquaintance with our duty to each other and to God. We have also an experience of the needs and aspirations of the soul. So far, then, as our moral knowledge extends, we are able to judge of the internal evidences of Christianity; and may, by the light of nature, discover its superiority to systems of false religion.

But we cannot gain a perfect knowledge of the universal law. We cannot understand all the conditions of order in the universe, nor all the conditions and relations of universal being. We can have but a very partial acquaintance with the relations in being between the creature and the Creator. We cannot search the Internal Nature of the Almighty, nor comprehend the Harmony of His Attributes in the Unity of His Being. Yet this perfect knowledge of God and of creation, would be requisite to a universal moral judgment.

Even in our own nature and in experience, the

moral judgment is often found to be limited. There is no infallible criterion of right and wrong. The law is not always written in clear and intelligible characters. Man is not, in fact, as God created him: different tribes and individuals sink to different depths of moral degeneracy. And besides the sources of error which lie hid in the corruption of human nature,—even though the law were always clear, and the judgment competent to guide us in duty to God, and in the relations between man and man, yet we cannot assume that even the perfect rules of human conduct can be any sufficient measure of the Divine Conduct. The perfect law of man depends upon the nature of man, and is applicable to every case of human duty. But there are depths in the Divine Nature, and mysteries in the Divine motives unsearchable by any human faculties.

We may see then that there is something which ill becomes us, in such arguments as have been quoted above. It is true God cannot be the Author of unnecessary suffering, any more than He can be untruthful. But to cause suffering or to permit it, may often, under particular circumstances, and for sufficient reasons, be not cruel but benevolent. What may be the sufficient reasons of the Divine Conduct is a question which cannot fall within our province. Even in the conduct of

a man, we know how difficult it is to take account of motives and circumstances which may be unknown. Yet, for all this, we may often be sure that he acts on good principles, and may know that he is a virtuous man. We may, in like manner, perceive, that the agency of the Supreme Creator often commends itself to our moral judgment, as Holy, and Just, and Good; while yet, in other cases, we may have more reason than in any judgment of man, to lay the hand upon the mouth, and to bow in silent reverence.

Objections to the Wisdom of revelation.

6. We shall find these and similar principles of scepticism to be fruitful in results; and shall, in following chapters, endeavour to obviate some of the difficulties which they are made to furnish, upon the Wisdom and Goodness of the Deity.

To know what we have to deal with, it is necessary, however painful to Christian readers, to make some extracts from recent publications.

The Divine Wisdom is called in question, by remarks on what are said to be "the puerile conceptions [5]" and "Jewish prejudices [6]" of the Scriptures, which prove them, it is supposed, to be unworthy of their Divine Author. "They seldom," writes one, "sustain my mind long in that high

[5] "The Soul," p. ix.

[6] Mr. Hennell's "Christian Theism," p. 5.

region which it was seeking, but drag it down into an earthly atmosphere of low trifling thoughts, petty local interests, and individual or national resentments [7]."

And still more explicitly in frequent observations on human sinfulness, and God's dealings with it, which proceed on the assumption that the sin of man, or its punishment, is chargeable upon God. "All things," writes Mr. Parker, giving his account of what he calls "the popular theology,"—"All things which God made work well except human nature; and that worked so badly that it fell as soon as it was put together. God must start anew," and so on till he comes to the conclusion,—"The human race does not turn out as God designed, or expected. It is a failure [8]." Mr. Newman also thinks that according to the same theology, "God is made out to be unwise in creating" the human race, of whom so many will perish without remedy [9].

And to the Divine Holiness in Scripture.

7. The Moral Goodness of the God of revelation is called in question by the same writers, in objections to the morality of the doctrine of Atone-

[7] Ib. p. 49.

[8] Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology; Sermons, p. 65, ed. 1853.

[9] Phases of Faith, p. 48, ed. 2nd.

ment. A large number of able writers, following many others in every age of the Church, concur in rejecting this fundamental article of the Christian faith. Mr. James Martineau pronounces it to be "morally and metaphysically absurd," and professes to give reasons for his opinion [1].

Similar views are maintained by Mr. Theodore Parker, "minister of the twenty-second congregational church, Boston, Mass." He often repudiates the idea of appearing, as he expresses it, "before the Omnipotent by attorney." He speaks of Jesus as "our friend, not our master, a brother who pleads with us, not an attorney who pleads with God, still less a Sacrifice for sins He never committed, and therefore could not expiate [2]."

Mr. Newman is no less free, in his opinion and criticism of the sacred doctrine [3], and many others, from deistical ministers of churches down to atheists [4], might be quoted to the same effect.

Objections to the revelation of Divine Love.

8. The Infinite Love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also a constant subject of criticism and reprobation with this school of writers,

[1] Rationale, ed. 4, p. 83. [2] Discourse of Religion, p. 175.

[3] Phases, p. 56.

[4] Mr. Holyoake, for instance, whom Mr. Newman calls "a sincere atheist,"—a title which it is not intended to question. Mr. Holyoake reciprocates,—"If men cannot see as I see, I shall be glad for them to see as Mr. Newman sees."

in connexion with the doctrine of eternal punishment. This is the especial mark of their indignation. But few will go the length of Mr. Parker in his "sermons" recently published. He here speaks with the freedom of a competent judge of the Almighty; and assumes the tone with which Christians may sympathise, when he applies it to an American slave-driver; but which becomes audacious and impious, when directed to the Inscrutable Judgments of the Deity. Though denying its inspiration, he would probably admit the Scriptural Truth of God,—"How Unsearchable are His Judgments, and His Ways past finding out:" yet he every where assumes that he has found out, and can estimate the Divine Judgments, in their most mysterious agency.

Quotations from this work can only serve to pain and shock the Christian reader. We shall pay particular attention to some of its assumptions and assertions, but are compelled to omit the dreadful language in which he speaks of "the popular theology," and represents the belief in the God of Revelation as more pernicious than atheism.

Such is the purport of sermons preached at Boston, U. S., by an able and learned minister. And, as far as we can judge at a distance, not without effect. He dwells, at much length, upon the Divine Perfections, or rather his own views of

them. The God of his theism is the God of revelation, in His Self-existent Nature; but in that view of His Character, which rejects the Christian doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement, the Judgment of God upon evil.

It cannot but command attention, to make the Divine Character the foundation of practical morality and goodness. And it may be true that the eternal foundation of morality is not always set forth as it might be in Christian churches. The severance of religion and morality is the destruction of both. They are related to one another as means to end. And the Divine Perfections are the ultimate foundation of morality, as the harmony of Heaven is its aim and tendency. The truth of the Divine Perfections is therefore of all the most momentous to mankind. Mr. Parker dwells largely upon this topic, and admits that his theism is indebted to "the popular theology" for its best conceptions. His partial truths are not less likely to gain attention, and will not be less generally attractive, because stripped of every thing which renders them terrible to the evil-doer. The mystery of the Divine conduct renders it easy, for a bold and unscrupulous writer, to enunciate as unquestionable truths, what are really assumptions beyond the knowledge of man; but which men easily accept as true, because they wish them to be

true. Plausible arguments and willing listeners will never be wanting to those who can affirm with confidence, that God is not good, unless He have provided for the ultimate happiness of all His creatures; or that it is inconsistent with His Perfections that there should be any such being as Satan; or that such a being cannot cause the ruin of any creature of God, without thereby proving himself to be God, or Superior to the Creator. Such assertions are not uncommon with modern infidelity. Shelley makes them the burden of his song; Mr. Parker argues them systematically, and his sermons are published in London as aids to free inquiry and progress.

Is it not then a hazardous experiment of philosophy, to receive from the Christian Scriptures the great truth of the Perfect Goodness of God, and then to judge that this or that doctrine of the Scriptures is inconsistent with that Perfect Goodness? They who have taught us, what nature could not have taught, that God is Love, would seem to be the most competent judges as to what truths are consistent with His Love. But our critics of Revelation would argue in the opposite direction. Jesus, they say, was very wise and good, but still a man like one of us. His teaching must therefore be examined and sifted. The Bible is one of many noble books, which have

assisted the spiritual development of the race, but still a human book. It has its excellencies, and it has its errors. We must "separate its pearls from its chaff," and avoid the popular idolatry of the day—Bibliolatry.

But is not the very fact, that the Scriptures alone have been able to bring home the truth of the Divine Goodness to the masses of mankind, and to give it currency in the world, a strong evidence of their Divine Authority? At all events this criticism is inconsistent. Its advocates receive from Jesus Christ the highest truth they know of God, and then reject the God Whom He reveals. They learn from Jesus that "God is Love," and then they say that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is a "malignant" God. Wishing to write with candour, they affirm that Jesus was the Greatest of the sons of men, a Chief Teacher and Benefactor of the race, and then they accuse Him of self-contradiction, on the very doctrine which He lived and died to bring home to the hearts of men. Error is common to man: the greatest minds have held error along with truth. But great men are not wont to contradict themselves on the very point on which they are great. If Jesus have taught us that God is Love, it is all the more fearful that He forewarns us of the consequences of wickedness.

Speculative and practical atheism.

9. Infidelity had long affected to treat the Bible with disdain, and the Saviour of mankind as an impostor. This form of unbelief could only become popular in countries, where the Scriptures had been concealed from men by an unfaithful church, and were but little known. Its unfairness was too palpable for those who are familiar with Holy Writ, and accustomed to judge for themselves. Such statements were sure to be examined and found false. Recent scepticism has here an advantage over its motley predecessors. It assumes that tone of candour and universal toleration, which always appear enlightened, and are in this age so popular. It admits all that is good in Christianity; it only seeks to purify it of its errors,—errors, however, which may well be excused, for they are human, and were to be expected at the time of its origin. They are sure to give way before the advancing philosophy, the higher moral development, the refined criticism of this later age of the world. Already the popular systems of Christianity are breaking up. The "popular theology" is tottering. It no longer appeals to "unimpeachable evidence," nor trusts to the open field of conflict. It deprecates discussion. It would preserve, by a discreet silence, a belief which is, at all events, beneficial. "Popular Christianity" is even now in "its transition state." It will cease

to exist as a distinctive system. It will combine with other systems in the catholicity of thought. "The shades of Athenian sages will at length receive, with friendly arms, their ally of Nazareth." "Theists of every nation, Christian, Jew, Mahometan or Chinese, can meet upon common ground." And fortunately for the great mass of those who call themselves Christians, but have nothing of Christianity, except the name,—fortunately for them, the name may be retained. "Jesus," we are told, "was a Theist, and drew much of His doctrine from His Own observation of God's works." Christian Theism may therefore express the convictions of all "who admit no authority above that of man's reason, and no revelation besides that of nature, yet listen to and honour one of the best expounders of God and nature in the Man of Nazareth [5]."

This attempt to retain the name of Christianity without its substance, will appear to many a dishonest artifice. Its author maintains that his is the true view of the effect and intention of Christ's Mission, and that of Christians in all ages mistaken. And he may consider that his Deistical scheme has at least as good right to the name of Christian, as the belief of the many nominal Christians, who

[5] Mr. Hennell's "Christian Theism," pp. 54. 59.

are practically atheists. Unhappily the present state of the Christian world leaves us but little right to accuse him of false pretences, however we may deny the justice of his claim.

The subject proposed to us[6] directs attention to that practical atheism, which takes the name of Christian, as well as to speculative atheism; and it may be due to Truth to admit, that there are worse evils than even scepticism, and that this sceptical school includes men who are not only eloquent and thoughtful, but show marks of good feeling and good principle, which, in many a so-called Christian, you will seek in vain. There are men amongst them whom one could trust, and every one knows how little confidence is to be placed in many who have no more of Christianity than the name. It is a matter of every day's experience, that men may call themselves Christians, and may even make loud professions, who act habitually on motives and principles, which many a heathen or infidel would repudiate with indignation.

If this be true, we shall not serve the cause of truth by blinking at it. It is no disparagement to Christianity, that self-interested persons make

[6] "From the whole, to point out the inferences most necessary for, and useful to mankind." Founder's deed.

it subservient to their secular schemes. It is often an involuntary homage, that human nature disguises itself under the name and show of it. Nor would it be fair to contrast the virtuous deist with the inconsistent professor of a faith, which, by its many noble examples of goodness, has done honour to humanity.

To false professions and empty forms of religion, wherever they may be found, an infidel school, like this, is the natural and proper corrective. If there were nothing better than these in the Christian Church, the infidel might well shout his *Io triumphe.* It would be time to look for another dispensation. But very different is the Christianity of the Bible, and, thanks to God, of numerous Christians who adorn their station in life. False religion always sows the seeds of unbelief. The great apostacy of the latter days will be a judgment on the false pretences of religious prosperity. But the true Church, throughout the world, will survive the tempests of opinion, and, if need be, also of persecution.

Christianity, from the first sermon of Jesus upon earth, and beyond any other form of religion which the world has known, has had to contend with the bitter enmity, the plausible false philosophy of men, and with the cruel tyranny of power, and has

survived the attacks of ages. All the powers of evil have been arrayed against it without success. It will also outlive this modern school, with all its candid admissions and confident assumptions; though one may tell us that "the world is in a state of transition from the belief in Christ as God;" another, that "miracles and prophecy are losing their influence over the minds of men," that "there has been a great mistake, for God's Works, and these only, are His Word;" and another, that the God of Revelation is "finite and malignant, its theology dreadful, and the days of its foul doctrines numbered." It will survive what are more dangerous by far, the coldness, the indifference, the false and treacherous adherence of formal and self-interested professors. Establishments may fall, churches may fall, and where they are unfaithful to Eternal Truth and Holiness, where they make religion the pretence of world ambition and dominion, assuredly they will fall. Self-seeking, secularism under the guise of religion,—a more odious form of it than the atheistic,—will soon have had their day. They may live on in impunity, and in high station, while intelligence is confined to the few: for churches little faithful to their Divine Commission have, in many countries, been powerful instruments of ambition, and convenient safeguards of abuses. But the mind of

man, with powers yet untried and unknown, is beginning to rouse itself from the sleep of ages. The mind of millions, long dormant, already moves, as though it lived. The moral and spiritual power of the race will, one day, be as great, as the material power which has been already set in action. In that day,—and once dawned, it will quickly rise,—the light of heaven will discover the dark corners of the earth. It will then be seen that immoral professors of Christianity are worse atheists, and ought to be so accounted, than men who openly deny the truth; as an open and honest enemy is not so much to be dreaded or despised, as a hypocritical and self-seeking friend. False and empty forms of religion will fall no doubt; and the sooner the better. The world will be freer, and wiser, and happier for the change. But Christianity will not fall. It is the reunion of man with God. It is the beginning of that perfect religion which fits him for a higher life. It is the fulfilment of the Eternal Purpose of God in his creation, and in his relation to other intelligent creatures of the same Creator.

Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of the Eternal God. Whatever may have been the prevalence of atheism and irreligion during eighteen centuries, the History of Christianity is all the more a testimony, that there was something beyond human in

the words He uttered with so much confidence, and at the time He did;—"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

CHAPTER V.

THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF HUMAN SINFULNESS WITH REFERENCE TO THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

Perfect moral nature.

1. The nature and effects of human sinfulness are patent in the life of every man, and are written on every page of history. It is to speak in language understood by all, to say that no people nor individual has been morally perfect, and that different tribes and individuals are in different moral conditions, and rise or fall to higher or lower degrees of imperfection.

A perfect moral state must be one which combines a clear understanding of the law of right, in its relations to the moral agent, with affections to admire and prefer it, an aversion to whatever is opposed to it, and an active will to obey it. Only One Example of such perfection is to be found in the history of man. That men know their duty, and admire virtuous conduct in others, far more

than they fulfil it in their own lives,—that talking or feeling is not doing, is a sort of natural proverb, which may be found variously expressed in many languages.

Course of degeneracy in individuals.

2. But it is well known that different tribes of men, as well as different individuals, sink to different depths of depravity. A virtuous man may, in the course of time, become habitually virtuous; till in all his actions he thinks and does what is right without effort. He grows more and more averse to evil and inclined to goodness, while his moral understanding becomes more and more sensitive to the distinctions of right and wrong. A vicious man, on the contrary, is always moving in the opposite course. At first, perhaps, alive to the reality, and sensitive to the beauty of truth and justice and every virtue, he enters, with hesitation, on a career of mischief, in defiance of better feelings and judgments. The second immoral action is generally easier than the first. The affections are gradually depraved: the mind loses its strength of will: and, unless it be impressed by some new motive, or roused, by reflection, to some strong effort, the final result is always a total disregard of duties which were once held sacred, a hardening against self-reproach, a recklessness of consequences, which seemed once of all things the most

fearful: till, at length, the understanding is darkened, it loses all perception of moral distinctions, it becomes blind to all difference of right and wrong; it regards the distinction as one of mere name or fashion, and looks back upon the remorse it felt as a silly delusion, without foundation in the nature of things;—perhaps a delusion of "the theological or fictitious condition." Every one knows something of this course of evil, so commonly disregarded, so full of meaning to the thoughtful. Every one is familiar with the indifference of inveterate sinfulness, and the cool remorselessness of practised crime.

Degeneracy of tribes.

3. Different tribes or people are also, like individuals, changed in character in the course of time; and are to be found in various conditions of moral imperfection, and various stages of degeneracy. Many tribes have possessed the developed understanding, and the soul to appreciate goodness, while debasing passions and lusts have domineered without restraint. Others have been almost destitute of the moral judgment, and of all respect for truth or virtue. But these are the tribes which are degraded beneath the brutes. They have not, perhaps, exceeded the former in the outrages of vice and crime. Lust and malignity cannot have been more wofully dominant over human nature,

than in the civilized heathen of classic times[1]; although other people have sunk deeper in the forfeiture of those faculties and endowments, which are distinctive of humanity. The Gospel, and it only, has saved Europe from the savage barbarism of Central Africa.

Some writers have appealed to these degenerate tribes, in disproof of an innate sense of duty. Thinking it not universal, they have considered it the production of national habits, education, or other accidental influences. But, in truth, the corruption of nations proves no more than that of individuals. Perhaps none have been quite destitute of all feeling of duty; but if it were so, it would not decide upon the natural constitution of humankind. Nations, as well as individuals, have their peculiar characters, which are transmitted from generation to generation, as we see on a less scale in families; and, no doubt, the degeneracy of tribes as of individuals, may proceed to the extinction of the best qualities of man, or, at least, to their constant repression from early infancy, by the prevalence of vicious customs and monstrous immoralities. But in tribes, as well as in individuals, the degradation of human nature is manifest. The

[1] As depicted, Romans i., and by classical writers, especially Thucydides, iii. 82—84.

true inference would appear to be, not that mankind are by nature destitute of all conscience, but that God deals with His creatures as a race, according to some Great Plan, unfolding itself from age to age. It suggests that a Divine purpose is to be fulfilled, not only in the life of each individual, but in the whole course of the world's history, and in those miraculous interpositions of the Almighty, by which its history has been so much influenced. Indeed such a design might be suggested by the very fact, that mankind exist, not as distinct and independent creatures, but as one race of beings, bound in the ties of common descent and consanguinity. That such a supposition is not inconsistent with the Divine Love to every creature has been already shown.

Original condition of man.

4. Upon this subject then we meet with the very interesting and important question:—What was the original condition of man, as he stood forth from the hands of the Creator? Has the history of the race been one of corruption, or of development, upon the whole? On this question hinges the whole difference of the Scriptural accounts of God, and His relations to mankind; and the anti-christian notions of a Creator of simple benevolence, with a race of imperfect creatures who need no supernatural assistance, but are

progressive through their natural faculties and powers.

Holy Scripture gives an account of the commencement of evil in the world. It is its distinct and constant doctrine, that God did not create man as he is. "God said, Let us make man in our Image, after our likeness." "And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good." This is not like the style of a human composition. Its dignity of simplicity and brevity is what may be believed to be Divine. Man would have said nothing, or would have said more of the great mystery of evil; God passes it over with a word. He removes the evil from Himself; but adds nothing to silence objections, or to satisfy curiosity.

From the account of the sinless creation the inspired writer goes on to the Fall of man, and indicates, with the same simple brevity, that sin had become the inheritance of the race. "God created man in His Own Image;" "Adam begat a son in his own likeness;" but between the creation of Adam and the first birth, transgression had incurred the sentence,—"Thou shalt surely die." That this account of the fall is assumed by the writers of the New Testament, as the foundation of the Christian doctrine, is known to every student of Scripture. "In Adam all die." The human

race had become "alienated from the life of God." A new creation could alone restore it. It was only "in Christ," that all could be "made alive." The teaching of Scripture respecting spiritual life and death, contains evident intimation of something beyond the reach of human knowledge. This is no more than we might expect beforehand; and the certainty that we cannot fathom the depths of life, nor follow the plans of Divine Agency, ought to restrain presumptuous questioning of revelation.

Fruitless questions.

5. It is not necessary to enter into the speculations upon this doctrine, by which Christians have amused themselves or provoked one another. The question whether Original Righteousness was a natural gift or a supernatural aid, whether the corruption of humanity consisted in a mental or a corporeal taint, have led to abundant speculation; and curiosity has been pushed even farther than such questions as these. It is difficult to distinguish the natural with exact precision from the supernatural, and the distinction is without meaning before the establishment of a course of nature. Nor can we expect to know all the effects of sin upon the soul, when we know so little of the springs and progress of disease, or of the full signification of the word death, in its application to the

body. We are wholly ignorant of the manner in which the life of soul or body issues forth from the Source of all being.

Mr. F. Newman on human sinfulness.

6. Attempts have been made to represent the Scriptural doctrine of human corruption as inconsistent with the Perfections of the Creator. But these objections are generally founded upon misapprehension. Thus Mr. Newman writes[2],—"It is of great importance to discern, that what is *popularly* called, 'the total depravity of human nature,' is more correctly the essential eternal imperfection of every created existence; and that that imperfection which is strictly necessary must not be appropriated by us as Sin." This opinion will be found to rest upon a mistake respecting moral perfection. "In order to be morally perfect," he continues, "we should need at once infinite wisdom, and affections of infinite power; and these are the incommunicable properties of God; hence every creature,—angels and archangels, beatified saints, and Adam fresh from his Maker's hand,—every one is morally imperfect, and, if the vulgar phraseology were justifiable, would deserve to be called sinful. Perfection, like Omnipotence, inheres in God alone; in this sense, He Only is Holy."

[2] The Soul, p. 55.

The writer goes on to remark on the calamitous error of confounding unwilling imperfection with sin, and points out, as an effect of the current "Bibliolatry," the mischiefs of this confusion to upright souls, who, finding they are still imperfect, fall into a bad conscience, which results either in a hypocritical routine of religion, or a miserable self-despair. The consequences follow so easily from the premises, they seem so natural, and are depicted with so much ingenuousness and simplicity of style, that readers, who have not time to think much upon the subject, are very likely to be led to the conclusion, which many writers would be glad to establish, that the Christian faith, instead of meeting the wants of man's religious nature, and conducing to his moral improvement, is rather calculated to foster hypocrisy and formalism, and to wound and crush the upright souls who trust to it. Such is the opinion of one, who, from the zealous profession of the Christian religion has sunk, step by step, into pure Deism, yet maintains with it a belief in a natural religion of Divine Communion. His readers, it is to be feared, will not generally be those who apprehend, that Christianity may be a check on moral progress.

The error appears here to lie in the assumption that infinite wisdom, or any infinite faculties,

are essential to moral perfection. These might go to constitute, what might perhaps be called an essential or absolute perfection,—a perfection of being: but morally, a creature must surely be considered perfect, when it is in exact adjustment to universal nature, in all the relations of the position in which God has placed it; when its faculties, to the extent of their power, combine in harmonious action in themselves and with the world which environs it; and all its agency is directed, within its sphere, to fulfil the Will of God. Such moral perfection is certainly conceivable, and, reason naturally conjectures, is the actual condition of all the creatures, as they proceed from the hands of the Creator.

Mr. Newman has another passage to the same effect[3].—"Man is finite and crippled on all sides; and frailty in one kind causes frailty in another. Deficient power causes deficient knowledge, deficient knowledge betrays him into false opinion, and entangles him into false positions." No doubt error may arise from deficiency of knowledge: yet it cannot need omniscience to guard against error, but only a clear knowledge on all points, which fall within the finite sphere of human life and action. It is certainly conceivable that good

[3] Phases of Faith, p. 141, 2nd ed.

instincts and an understanding sound within its province, may be sufficient to guide a finite being in all its conduct: and it cannot be assumed to be impossible, that limited powers may be exactly balanced and harmonized by the Creator, so as to fulfil His Will in all the movements of their life. It is therefore credible that man, and even the inferior parts of creation, were all at first "very good" or perfect, in the Sight of Him Who "saw every thing that He had made."

Original Sin.

7. Nor can there be any sufficient objection to the name Original Sin. The line must be drawn in theory, as we may be sure it will in the Divine Judgment, between the natural disorder of human nature, and the wilful sins of the individual; but there can be nothing objectionable, if we consider the perfection of the Divine Nature and Agency, in defining sin to be, whatever, in the nature or agency of intelligent beings, is in opposition to the Divine Will, or in discord with the Harmony of His works, whether in any particular instance it be voluntary or involuntary. *From our human point of view*, we might think it sufficient to call only actual wrong-doing by the name of sin, and the original fault of human nature by that of weakness or frailty. Yet even in this case, the word sin would include involuntary, as well as

voluntary actions: for every one knows that prolonged habits of vice destroy the power of the will, and enslave reason to passion; yet none would refuse to call an action sinful, because committed by a man who has become the slave of vice. But the Word of God looks from a higher point of view, and speaking of sin with reference to the Creator, regards it as including every corruption of His Perfect Work, whether through individual agency, or in its transmitted effects. That there is universal disorder in human nature cannot be denied. That mental qualities and dispositions, mental disorders and imperfections may be hereditary, is a fact as ordinary as the transmission of bodily constitution or resemblance, of longevity or disease. There is nothing irrational in the doctrine of Scripture, that Infinite Perfection cannot have created a race of beings in moral disorder; nor in the doctrine, that He cannot regard what is imperfect with complacency. In His dealings with mankind, as well as with every man, "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

Objection to the Divine Justice.

8. It is a very old objection, but still reiterated, that this doctrine, in making the children suffer for the sins of their parents, charges the Creator with injustice. But without reason. The natural condition of man is a matter of fact; and whether

it be regarded as sinful or as imperfect, is immaterial to the question of the Divine Justice. If it be not inconsistent with it to have created man as he is;—if, notwithstanding the Perfections of the Creator, sinfulness and imperfection be inseparable from the creature; it cannot give a higher view of the Divine Character, to regard sinfulness and imperfection as original in every man, than as transmitted from generation to generation.

But the full answer to this objection is furnished by revelation, which confirms the truth of conscience, that every man will be accountable for his own works, and will not be responsible for any hereditary taint of evil. It also instructs us that as all are fallen through the fall of one, so the remedy is coextensive with the disease. It is well known that the writers of the New Testament regard the doctrine of universal sinfulness, as correlative with that of universal redemption. They appear studiously to connect the two doctrines, and to pass from the one to the other; as if they would intimate, that we may neither regard ourselves as ruined beyond recovery, nor judge of the Divine Wisdom or Goodness in the world, without taking account of our restoration to a state of moral trial by Jesus Christ, according to the eternal purpose of God to redeem mankind by His Son.

Objection to the Divine Wisdom.

9. There is yet another point to be noticed, which takes the form of an objection to the Divine Wisdom. We find it in Mr. Parker[4]:—"All things which God made work well except human nature, and that works so badly that it fell as soon as it was put together." We meet with it also in Mr. Newman[5]; who says of the doctrine of sinfulness, that "Calvin supposes God to have created the most precious thing on earth in *unstable equilibrium* . . . . Surely all nature proclaims, that if God planted any spiritual nature at all in man, it was in *stable equilibrium*, able to right itself when deranged."

This is expressed in terms which charge the Almighty with folly, if He be the Creator of a race, which fell so easily and universally. It is a sufficient answer to ask,—Are we competent judges of the Divine Purpose in the existence of man? To know whether it be inconsistent with His Wisdom to have created a race of beings so frail, we must know that there could not be sufficient reasons for His procedure. But who is to discover to us His purpose in the creation of our race? And let it not be said, as it often is, that we are unreasonable in flying from the known to the unknown, and taking refuge in a *perhaps*. The

[4] Theism, &c., p. 65.

[5] Phases, p. 60.

objection to the Wisdom of the Creator in making the world as it is, can only be answered with reference to the question, *Why He so made it;* and this question cannot, in the nature of things, receive its answer from the world. The Purpose of God was prior to the creation: His Will determined by motives necessarily Superior to it. Revelation alone can give us information upon so mysterious a subject; and it will be one inquiry of succeeding chapters, whether it do not discover a great Plan of the Almighty, which is now being fulfilled in the existence of this world of ours, and is dependent upon that very truth to which objection is so often taken;—that God made man upright, but liable to fall; and constituted him such in his nature, that the sin of one involved all his posterity in its consequences.

Other objections.

10. Other objections to the doctrine of human degeneracy must here be passed over, as foreign to our subject. But it would not be difficult to show, that the differences of Christians upon human sinfulness are often very frivolous and unnecessary. And with reference to other objections of scepticism, it may suffice to observe, what is implied in the preceding, that if there be any current opinion that "man naturally hates God, hates other men, hates truth with his reason,

justice with his conscience, love with his affections, holiness with his soul; loves falsehood, injustice, hate, and wickedness, all for their own sake, and not as means to an end—hates God and only loves the Devil":[6]—if there be a current opinion that virtuous and lovely qualities are in themselves sinful, or that any natural power or faculty of man is evil in itself;—that "God disowns my nature as not His work but the devil's work, and thereby tells me that He is not my Creator, and teaches that I owe Him no obedience, no worship, no trust";[7]—if there be a custom with any Christians, of presenting the doctrine of human corruption in a form which must discourage virtuous endeavour, and "snap the sinews of moral effort";[8] —such opinions, and such custom are as contrary to the Word of God, as to the moral nature of man.

Reason and revelation concur, that God is the Universal Creator—the Author and Giver of every power and faculty of soul and body. Experience and revelation concur, that there is confusion in man's nature. Humanity in its ruin calls to God for deliverance, revelation discovers a remedy, and all men are, in some degree, partakers of its benefits. Every motive to moral endeavour and

[6] Theism, Atheism, &c., p. 64. [7] Phases of Faith, p. 60.
[8] Mr. Holyoake; "Christianity and Secularism," p. 133.

virtuous practice which can be found in the world and in the moral nature of man, is approved by revelation, and confirmed in the system of Redemption by new motives, far higher, more powerful, more inspiring, than any which are to be found in humanity.

Man owes the debt of holy obedience to God as the Creator Who made him upright, much more as his Deliverer from moral ruin. But we shall recur to this truth. It must be admitted upon the present subject, that the fall of all, through the sin of one—the moral disorder of a creation which was at first very good, could not have taken place without the foreknowledge and permission of Infinite Wisdom. This truth would seem to indicate what might be anticipated from conceptions of Immutable Wisdom, that there is an eternal purpose of the Divine agency in the Great Plan of ages.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEVELOPMENT THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE.

BOOK IV. CHAP. VI. Account of it.

1. The difference between the Scriptural doctrine of the fall, and the opinion that man was originally imperfect, may seem, at first sight, to be one of little importance. But it touches the foundation of the whole system of revelation, and extends to the question of Christianity or infidelity.

Little differences are sometimes the turning points between a system of truth and one of error. It is so in the present case. The Christian system is so consistent with itself; its principal doctrines are so closely bound together, and one of them so constantly implied in another, that to deny the degeneracy of man, is to reject the doctrine of his supernatural restoration.

The doctrine of original imperfection lies at the root of a current theory in great favour with anti-

christian writers. It is that of the natural development of mankind. It denies that the works of God were originally very good; affirming that man did not start from civilization and from the worship of One God, but from a low savage state of cannibalism and nature-worship. It thus removes the origin of evil from the responsibility of man, and consequently charges it, either on the imperfection of nature, if this be imagined to be self-existent, or on the Creator, if the system be one of theism. It manifestly charges sin and evil directly on the Creator, to suppose Him to have called into being a horde of the lowest and vilest savages, who could have no possible escape from the worst vices and horrors incident to mankind. From this state there is supposed to have been a slow and gradual development of the race, during many thousands of years. Some advocates of the theory show a partiality for the Chinese and Egyptian chronologies, which afford a longer period for the supposed progression.

Placed then originally in a state so low and wretched, and left to the guidance of his natural powers,—or rather to those imperfect capacities of his original nature,—which were the germs of his present faculties, he owes no debt to God, and cannot be under His displeasure for the sin and misery of the world. He needed no Divine interference

to bring him aid or rescue. Having advanced thus far in its natural strength, the race is to go on progressing to a glorious future, in which ignorance will be dispelled and evil conquered, by the might of science and civilization. Man is not fallen but imperfect; not degenerate but progressive; and, at the present early age of the race, —for though the past must be immensely prolonged, to bring it from savage life to what it is, yet the future needs to be prolonged far more, to carry it from its present state to perfection,—in the present early age of the race, we can form no conception of the grandeur of its ultimate destiny.

Its advocates.

2. This theory finds support in "the Positive Philosophy," where it is briefly and dogmatically stated, after the usual manner of that book. "The theological period of humanity could begin no otherwise than by a complete, and usually very durable state of pure Fetishism[1]. . . . Some have been so perverse as to place monotheism farthest back, and fetishism as a corruption of polytheism; but such inversions are inconsistent with both the laws and the facts of human history. The real starting point is, in fact, much humbler than

[1] "Writers who have attempted to classify heathen religions assign the lowest place to the Fetish worship, the adoration of a lifeless corporeal object." Schlegel's Phil. of Hist., lect. vi.

is commonly supposed, man having every where begun, by being a fetish worshipper, and a cannibal[2]." The "philosophy" thus talks of the laws of nature and the facts of history, but leaves its readers to seek them for themselves.

The theory is also adopted by Mr. Parker, and is an essential part of his spurious theism; but neither does he undertake to reconcile it with philosophy or with facts.

But though the opinion is very confidently maintained, we shall search in vain for evidence of its truth. Its best support is, in general, nothing better than imaginary difficulties and inconsistencies of Christian doctrines: which, however, are inconsistent, only when they are misunderstood; and difficult, only when they relate to the "Judgments Unsearchable." Without doubt, the theory has a recommendation to those who would understand every thing. In pretending to dispense with revelation or supernatural intervention, it reduces the whole plan and course of the world to the ordinary laws of nature and of man, and brings them within the scope of the understanding. But the least reflection might show, that every common fact of existence is as incomprehensible, as the Divine agency in the dispensations of Grace.

[2] Pos. Phil., ii. p. 186.

Analogy of material development.

3. The notion of human progress by natural development, is apt to be suggested by the developments of the material world [3]. The mind, prone to argue by analogy, and loving to reduce many operations of nature to one law, may transfer the notion of development from matter to mind. To carry out the theory consistently, we must reduce the two developments to one succession of being, extending through all the changes of existence, from its simplest original condition. We thus fall on the material systems which make mind to be but an evolution of matter, and suppose the world of life as well as that of matter,—the world, animate and inanimate, to have been educed by slow progression from eternal atoms.

Mr. Parker however, and even "the Positive Philosophy," deny the unity of man and matter. The latter admits no state previous to fetishism, no state "in which the human species was altogether material, and incapable of any speculation whatever." The existence of man and matter are its ultimate facts; it knows nothing beyond them. Mr. Parker agrees with it to this point, but here ingrafts the development theory upon his speculative theism. It is with this deistic form of the theory that we are at present concerned.

[3] Mr. Parker notices this analogy. Discourse, p. 69.

4. The analogy to which allusion has been made, may be turned with far greater force in the opposite direction. Intelligence, love, and the various affections of mind, are incommensurable with all known properties of matter; but, though very distant shadows, are, in some degree, similar to the Eternal Perfections. The theist who believes the Creator to be a Spirit, has more reason to expect that finite mind will be created in the perfection of its nature, or, as the Scripture declares, in the image of God, than that it will be subject, like matter, to pass through long ages of development.

And there is another distinction between mind and matter which deserves attention. In the long series of progressions and revolutions, by which the material world has advanced to its present state, it is the same identical matter from first to last, which continues under the various forms of nature. Whatever have been the strife of elements in the long periods of geology, whatever the changes and catastrophes of the globe, it is probable that not one particle of its substance has been added or removed. Minds, on the contrary, are individually distinct; each possesses in itself an independence of that causality which belongs to matter. There is therefore no probability in the development of mind, according to any analogy of the material world.

God, not the Creator of savages.

5. But it is unphilosophical (at least Plato thought so), if it be not also impious, to regard God as the Creator of a race of savage beings, who cannot attain to the proper faculties of their nature, unless through the confusion and horrors of long ages of barbarism, and the misery of many generations. Reason naturally anticipates that the works of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness must be in perfect order and harmony. Such has been the opinion of the wisest of mankind without revelation[4]. It is more consistent with theism, to believe that God cannot be the Author of confusion; more reasonable to seek the source of misery and strife in the freewill of man, than to make it the natural and necessary result of the original conditions of creation. It gives us a higher conception of the Divine Goodness, to know God as the Creator of a harmonious and perfect world, though it should be ruined by the sinfulness of its inhabitants, than of a world, which, in its millions of people, must necessarily be a state of savage barbarism and cannibalism. It would appear that the Scriptural doctrine of the fall is the very truth which is wanted, to reconcile the universal sinfulness of man, and the proneness to evil even of the best dispositions, and under circumstances the

[4] Thus Plato, besides the motto of this volume:—Θέμις οὔτ' ἦν οὔτ' ἐστὶ τῷ ἀρίστῳ δρᾷν ἄλλο πλὴν τὸ κάλλιστον. Timæus, cap. x.

most favourable to virtue, with the necessary perfection of the Divine Works.

Appeal to history.

6. But let us direct attention to some of the facts, to which we have been referred. The theory meets with its decided failure, in its opposition to all that is known of the history of the world. Its advocates cannot point to a single instance, in which mankind have risen from savage to civilized life, without the aid of those influences, which the Christian regards as of supernatural origin. Such indeed has been the influence of the Scriptures in the world, that it is difficult to find the people who have not, directly or indirectly, been indebted to them. It may be stated as a fact, that all civilized nations of ancient or modern times, can be shown *to have derived instruction, either from the Scriptures or from Scriptural traditions.* The people who have been found destitute of such traditions and beyond the reach of the Christian revelation, are always reduced to a savage condition; and they who have possessed the traditions alone, without the aids of more recent revelations, give evidences in their history, or in their records, sometimes in very distinct terms, that their nation has passed through a course, not of development, but of degradation.

If these be facts in the history of mankind, they

will go far to show that all human goodness, religious, moral, or intellectual, is owing, not merely to any powers of humanity which can be called natural, but either to the primitive education of the race by God, or to the frequent interpositions by which He has saved it from utter ruin.

The savage tribes. Fetishism.

7. It would seem to be no light evidence of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures, that the most highly developed and cultivated people of the world, not excepting our modern speculative deists, and, it may be added, they who have gained the highest and purest knowledge of God, are precisely those who have fallen within the light of the Bible; while the most degraded and debased are those who have been wholly beyond its reach. The savage tribes of Central Africa, of the South Sea Islands, with some of the American tribes, exhibit the human race in its lowest stage of corruption. In many of these tribes, the only evidences of the religious element of humanity are discovered in traces of a wild nature-worship, or a fetish worship of corporeal objects, shown in the superstitious use of amulets and magical instruments [5], but without religious rites, without the idea of a Supreme Being or any conception of

[5] Robertson's America, Book iv. chap. vii.

creation. Others of them have been found to possess a religion, like that of the Mexicans, which consisted in horrible rites, to appease the fury of evil deities.

Such is the condition of man, when he has been farthest removed from all influence of the Jewish or Christian Religions, and so isolated from the rest of mankind, that primitive tradition was less likely to be retained. Perhaps the simplest, and most convincing answer to the development theory, is to be found in the judgment, which common sense can with difficulty avoid, that these degraded tribes could never have attained a higher civilization, or a purer form of religion, unless through commerce with people superior to themselves. At all events, it is a fact that no such instance of development is to be found in the history of man. One indeed has been mentioned,—that of the Jews "in their early and remarkable passage from fetishism to polytheism and monotheism[6]!" But this, of all the revolutions of history, is the last to be alleged as a proof of mere *human* development. Whether there were not something more than human in this instance, is the very question in dispute. Indeed Mr. Parker mentions it only in an incidental way.

[6] Mr. Parker's Discourse, p. 36.

BOOK IV. CHAP. VI. Classical records.

8. Let us look back then to the civilized nations of mankind. We need say nothing of modern civilization; every one knows that in Europe it has grown and spread with Christianity. In modern India and China it has certainly not advanced, since the dawn of the Christian religion; and, whatever proofs of degeneracy may be found among them, there is none of progress. Their best and earliest writings remain the same as two thousand years ago.

But we may briefly advert to the records of classical civilization, although they have frequently engaged the attention of Christian writers. These records abound in Scriptural traditions, sometimes much corrupted, it is true, but too numerous, and too often coincident to be mistaken. The early Christian writers did not fail to enlarge upon this fact in their apologies and exhortations to the heathen. They often accused the poets and philosophers of borrowing their best light from inspired sources [7]; and we have enough of ancient literature remaining, to show that either there was good foundation for the charge, or that the classical writers possessed traditions of the events recorded in the Scriptures.

[7] Hence Clement applies to them the words "thieves and robbers" (St. John x. 8), because they borrowed without acknowledgment. (Strom. i. xvii.)

These remains contain frequent and distinct corroborations of the early history of the Bible. The most remarkable of these are the universal prevalence, in all nations civilized and uncivilized, of the seven day division of time, and of the custom of sacrifice. Numerous other traditions are to be found, and, amongst them, direct testimonies to the primitive excellence of creation, and to human degeneracy.

Division of weeks, and custom of sacrifice.

9. Josephus affirms that every city of the Grecians or barbarians followed the Jewish custom of resting on the seventh day [8]. Clement of Alexandria quotes Homer, Hesiod, and Callimachus in proof of the fact [9]. Theophilus of Antioch mentions the seventh day as held in esteem by all men, "though they know not for what reason [1]." And it is certain from other writers, that the hebdomadal division of time was universal, wherever trace of civilization was to be found. But we have a proof of this in every day life, more immediate and convincing than any evidence from ancient writers. The names of our days, in fact, convey to us a tradition, which belonged to our fathers before the Christian era, and thus connect us with the early institutions of the world.

[8] C. Apion. ii. 40.
[9] Stromata, v. xiii. p. 600.
[1] Ad Autol. ii. 12. Also Tertullian, Apol. xvi.

This custom alone is fatal to the development theory. It is not an institution of cannibals and savages. Yet its universality shows that it must have come down from the earliest age of the race. It cannot be accounted for except as a positive institution of an early and civilized age.

Golden age.

10. The original perfection of the race is directly testified, in the common tradition of the Golden Age. It is probable that a race which has degenerated, will retain confused recollections of a state gone by. "The Positive Philosophy[2]" and Mr. Parker[3] attempt to evade this evidence, by ascribing it to the tendency of the mind to admire and aggrandize the past. This is arbitrary, and not very satisfactory. The tradition is too general to have originated in a delusion, especially among various and distant people, who are supposed to have slowly emerged from savage life. It is of great weight in the absence of evidence to the contrary. Besides it admits of question whether this very tendency to admire the past, be not in itself an evidence of human degeneracy. If the race had been developed from cannibalism, would not the human mind, in its long struggle with wretchedness, have acquired the disposition to think meanly of the past?

[2] Vol. ii. p. 76.

[3] Disc., p. 70.

11. Other traditions corroborative of the sacred history are very remarkable, especially those of the Great Deluge. They are handed down from ancient writers of various countries, some of whom mention several of the particulars, which agree closely with the Mosaic account of the flood. Thus Eusebius, quoting from Josephus, says that the flood and the ark are mentioned by all Gentile historians; of whom Berosus the Chaldæan gives an account of it, and states that the ark rested on a mountain of Armenia; where a part of it still remained in his own time, and that the pitch of it was often carried away and used as a charm [4].

Other traditions.

12. Traditions also remain, from various sources, of the fall of man, of the original length of life, the commencement of idolatry, the Tower of Babel, and the dispersion [5]. These, and others, have

[4] Eusebius, Præp. Evang. ix. xi. quoting Joseph. Antiq. lib. i. Eusebius has here a collection of ancient records, of which a summary is given by Grotius de Ver. i. § 16. See also Bochart's Geog. Sac., lib. i. Berosus is said by Rollin to have lived in the third century before the Christian era, but this is probably not very certain. Josephus quotes other ancient writers, of whom Nicolaus Damascenus has the statement about the remains of the ark. It is also in Theoph. ad Autol., lib. iii. Berosus is quoted again in Joseph. c. Apion., i. c. xix. to the same effect. Eusebius adds a quotation on the flood from the Commentaries of Abydenus, which, he says, is from the Records of the Medes and Assyrians.

[5] Euseb., ib. cap. xiii. xiv.

often been cited by Christian writers; and need not have been alluded to at present, if they were not quietly ignored by those who tell us it is "perverse" to place monotheism at the beginning of man's religious history; and, though they give us no evidence on the other side, that "such an inversion is inconsistent with facts."

It is not necessary to our case, that we should be able to prove each of these ancient testimonies to be authentic. It may be expected that such traditions will be involved in some obscurity. Ancient fragments which have come down from the remote past, cannot rest on the clear evidence of more recent history. But the number and concurrence of these traditions entitle them to great weight upon the whole. They show that all the remains we have of the primitive history of mankind agree with the Mosaic accounts. There is nothing on the other side to support the modern theory. And they can be explained, only by referring them to the same source of primitive truth with the inspired writings. That they have suffered in the transmission, and are often mingled with fable, is a testimony to the simplicity and consistency of the Bible. And the sacred volume itself, it must be observed, deserves the greatest weight as a historical record, independently of its authority from inspiration.

13. Other testimonies of profane history are still more indisputable than the European. Next after the Bible, the best and most authentic accounts of the primitive condition of the race, are to be found in the literature of India. The Indians are, to this day, the keepers of their own records, and of their sacred books, the Vedas; and have preserved them with the utmost jealousy. Modern researches have established, that this most ancient literature of the world inculcates a pure doctrine of the Supreme Being, and testifies to the degeneracy of the human race. This last is the essential doctrine of the system of Emanation, and distinguishes it from pantheism with which it has been mistakingly confounded. It is, in fact, the very antithesis of pantheism. Pantheism makes all things one with God, and destroys the distinction of right and wrong. The Emanation doctrine confesses the separation of created beings from the Creator, and finds in it the root of evil, as reunion with God is the highest destiny of the virtuous [6].

[6] Omitting atheism, which is rather folly than philosophy, may not every philosophy of existence which is not pantheistic be considered one of Emanation? In Pantheism, the creature may be one, either in essence, or, as in all fatalism, only in operation, with the Creator. Emanation may also be either from the Divine Essence, or from the Divine Agency. In Christian Theism the creature proceeds not from the Essence but from the Agency of the Creator; but the spiritual life of the soul consists in communion with the Eternal Spirit.

A system of this kind is to be found in the laws of Menù, which are of the very highest antiquity. They testify, in language of the deepest melancholy, to the constant degradation of, what is expressed, in a line of Menù's, as—"This fearful world of existence, which sinks ever deeper and deeper in ruin and destruction"—a line, which reveals, as Frederic von Schlegel informs us, "the predominant feeling, the ruling spirit of the entire system[7]." Humboldt also mentions "a belief deeply rooted in the earliest Indian doctrine of Krishna;—'Truth was originally deposited with men, but gradually slumbered and was forgotten[8].'" He notices, in the same place, the evidences in the structure of languages, recently still farther developed, that the savage tribes of mankind have lapsed from a civilization which was early lost.

"Some," we have been told, "have been so perverse as to place monotheism farthest back;" and "such inversions" are said to be "inconsistent with facts." Schlegel gives us the facts in the first place, from which he concludes that, "notwithstanding the rude errors and arbitrary fictions with which their philosophy is every where overlaid, . . . still it cannot be denied that the early

[7] On the Indian Language, Literature, and Philosophy, Book ii. chap. ii.

[8] Cosmos, vol. ii. p. 113.

Indians possessed a knowledge of the True God; all their writings are replete with sentiments and expressions, noble, clear and severely grand, as deeply conceived and reverentially expressed as in any human language in which men have spoken of their God."

The same writer, in his "Philosophy of History," points out similar confirmations of the Mosaic Records to be found in the independent literature of the Chinese; some of which was ancient in the time of Confucius, in the sixth century before Christ, and probably goes back to within a very few generations of the flood.

Mr. Parker on natural progress.

14. We may now direct attention to some of Mr. Parker's observations on the arbitrary theory which he supports. He tells us that in the worship of nature, visible objects have generally been regarded as "types of the Infinite Spirit[9]," that "even the most savage nations regarded their idols only as types of God." As this opinion seems to fall in with the truth that the primitive religion was monotheism, he attempts to reconcile it with his own theory, by holding that the religious sentiment would lead man to the One God, "if the conditions of its action were perfectly fulfilled.

[9] Discourse, p. 30.

But as this is not done in a state of ignorance and barbarism, therefore the religious sentiment mistakes its object, and sometimes worships the symbol, more than the Spirit it stands for."

Again, he states the question to be,—"Did the human race set out from civilization and the true worship of one God, or from cannibalism and the deification of nature?" and decides for the latter hypothesis. He then accounts for the traces of Monotheism to be found in all the lower stages of religion. "This must necessarily follow from the identity of the human race. If man is the same in all ages, and this sentiment is natural to him, then we must expect to find such expressions of it in the poets and philosophers—in the religion of India, Greece, and Rome. Men of the same spiritual elevation see every where the same spiritual truth [1]."

We read again in his first sermon on "the Popular Theology;"—"From the beginning of the human history, there has been a progressive development of all the higher faculties of man [2]:" and again;—"The leading nations of the Caucasian race have, thus far, outgrown, first the savage's rude fetishistic worship; then classic heathenism; then patriarchal deism; then the Mosaic worship

[1] Ib. pp. 68. 71.

[2] Theism, &c., p. 51.

of Jehovah; and now the most enlightened portion thereof have come to what is called Christianity. Shall we stop with the present form of religion called Christianity. Mankind never surrenders to time. There is a progress in what is called Christianity [3]."

Yet, notwithstanding all this, he tells us elsewhere, that "perhaps no form of religion has yet been adopted which has not the stain of fetishism upon it. The popular Christian Theology is full of it [4]."

A writer may easily fall into minor inconsistencies, without prejudice of his main design, and it is never worth while to search for them. But here is a fundamental and vital question, on which the whole difference turns, between Christian Theism, and the Theism of Mr. Parker: here is a point on which depend the questions,—Did God create man in His own image, or did He call to being a horde of savages? Is evil the work of God in man, or the work of man in himself through an independent will? Is the race capable of development in mind, morals, and religion through the natural faculties, or does it stand in need of supernatural aid? Does the history of the past furnish us with that evidence of human

[3] Ib. p. 53.

[4] Discourse, p. 34.

progress, *independent of the supernatural assistance of the Hebrew and Christian religions*, which can justify the arrogance of modern Deism, and the blasphemous invective of Mr. Parker against the God of the Holy Scriptures?

His justification depends upon this question, and it is therefore one upon which it behoved him to be especially precise, explicit, and consistent. How far he has answered such an expectation, will appear to those who can answer the questions,—how, if man be "the same in all ages," there can have been "a progressive development of all the higher faculties of man:" whether the existence, at all times, of "men of the same spiritual elevation," can be reconciled with a state of human progression from savage cannibalism: whether to worship natural objects and idols *as types of God*, and the nature-worship of the early Indians, penetrated, as it was, with the knowledge of the One True God, be identical with the savage nature-worship and fetishism of America and Africa: how it can be true that the sentiment and idea of God must express themselves spontaneously, and yet not express themselves, unless the conditions of their action be perfectly fulfilled, which "in a state of ignorance and barbarism is not done:" how, in short, there can have been such a wondrous progression in

religion from the rude fetish worship of the savage, through five or six distinct stages, to the Christianity of the present day, and the advanced Theism of Mr. Parker's "Church," yet Christianity be full of fetishism, and the earliest records of religion that we possess, contain unquestionable evidence, that, at the beginning of this progression, the Indian Theism was as pure and elevated as our own.

When these apparent inconsistencies shall have been explained, we shall still want evidence of facts for the development scheme: meanwhile they can only be regarded as the inconsistencies into which a writer must fall, who attempts to square the facts of history with a false and arbitrary assumption. The truth is, there are two schools in Mr. Parker, which are, unfortunately, inconsistent with one another,—the school of Des Cartes, and the school of "the Positive Philosophy." The foundation of his theism is laid in the religious nature of man, which implies the existence of the Supreme Being. This fundamental idea of his system makes it, from the first, inconsistent with development. The idea and conception of God are the highest which humanity has attained, or can attain; and, according to Mr. Parker, they have been attained by men of the same spiritual elevation in every age. There is

little room here for progression. "The Positive Philosophy" *has* a progression, or, as some may perversely call it, a regression; for the course of it is to get rid of this idea of God, as a delusion of the "infantine theological state."

We have endeavoured to estimate the argument from the idea of God in human nature. It conveys truth to the ignorant, but cannot give scientific knowledge till it has been established on general principles. And a searching investigation was requisite, before Mr. Parker should have drawn from naked conceptions his sweeping conclusions against the popular theology. We may use an illustration of his own. Des Cartes and Comte are the Jachin and the Boaz of his Theology. Kant long since taught us the value of Cartesianism, and his Critique strikes down "the first column" of this system. Mr. Parker's Theism "swings in the air at one end." The "laws and facts of human history" to which we have been referred, "strike away the other column," and the system "swings in the air at the other end. It lacks a philosophical basis and an historical superstructure, false in its idea, and false also in its historic fact." The idea cannot judge of Infinite Perfections: historic facts are against the theory. History too fully confirms the truth of experience, that the common course of human

nature, when left to itself, is not to develope but to corrupt; not to meliorate the works of God, but to mar them. In the history of the world, as in that of every soul of man, it needs the aid of One Superior to itself.

Classification of religions.

15. An observation must be added on the modern attempts to classify the different forms of religion, under the heads of Fetishism, Polytheism, and Monotheism. Schlegel notices the unsatisfactory nature of such classifications, and points out the necessity of ascertaining, not only "what were the objects of Divine worship, but what were the views, intentions, and doctrines connected with it."

A distinction of this kind has been already indicated in the chapter on pantheism. Some systems, it was observed, hold the doctrine of One Infinite God, the Source of Being, but are pantheistic, rather in regarding the finite as inseparable from the Essence of the Infinite, than as constituting that Essence. In other systems the Infinite is nothing else than the arithmetical sum or totality of all finite existences; or, in some systems, but an intellectual nonentity of the mind's conception.

Similarly, nothing can be more important than to distinguish that nature-worship, which deifies

all created things as emanations from the Uncreate; and that fetishism, to which alone the name belongs, which has lost all notion of creation, or of a Supreme Being. The one is the first stage of degradation: it shows us man deeply sensible of his original, but with a melancholy feeling of degeneracy; conscious of evil, yet refusing to believe that he is no longer Divine, and that the Spirit of the Highest no longer dwells with him as it did; still sceptical of the sentence,—"Thou shalt surely die." The other and true fetishism is the last and most degraded condition of man;—dead in intellect, dead in conscience, dead—not only as no longer in Divine communion,—but in the very faculties which give him the conception of Divinity. It would seem as if the general conscience of mankind, like that of an individual, felt most keenly in the earliest stage of decline.

A similar remark applies to polytheism. All image-worship is, in Scripture, idolatrous; even though the image be considered a type of God. But here also there are degrees of sinfulness and degeneracy. The systems of classic heathendom, which retained notions of the True God, are widely different from the savage worship of devils,—that religion of unmixed fear, which had forgotten the Author of all good, and sought, by horrible sacrifices, to propitiate the imaginary authors of evil.

It is the difference between the worship of Brahma and that of Siva; which are far apart, though they be coexistent. Such systems are no more to be identified, because both fall under the name of polytheism, than the former, because modern system makers have chosen to class them all under the head of fetishism.

To overlook these distinctions in the classification of religions is much the same thing as to construct a natural history by classifying animals according to their magnitude, without taking account of any differences which subsist among them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIVINE WISDOM AND GOODNESS IN THE REVELATIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Pride of the development theory.

1. The difference between Christianity and the development theory may be briefly stated. This charges evil upon the Creator and gives to man the credit of all goodness. The other declares all good to be of God, all evil to be of the creature. If sin be the necessary result of human imperfection, man cannot be responsible for it. Yet he will still pride himself on his advancement in the strength of self. The Positive Philosophy instructs us to "admit a collective pride in that human progressiveness which has brought us into our present state[1]." Every thing great and good in human nature may thus be claimed as the work of man; and nothing but a chaos of disorder is attributed

[1] Vol. ii. p. 186.

to the agency of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness. The opposite view is more reasonable, and more consistent with theism;—"If thou hast received it, why dost thou glory?" It may deserve consideration, whether the permanence of benevolent Design in the frame and constitution of things, while evil is always a disorder or perversion of natural powers, be not an evidence additional to those of the preceding chapter, that all evil is the work of the finite and mutable, all good of the Immutable and Eternal.

Salvation an Eternal Purpose.

2. The Holy Scriptures affirm that the work of God in creation was perfect, and has been corrupted by the work of man. Man, once fallen, cannot recover himself, nor rise, in the course of ages, from a lower to a higher condition. By himself, his tendency has been to degenerate. This truth of Scripture is confirmed by history, wherever the course of history can be viewed apart from the influences of revelation.

The Love of God had determined in eternal counsels to bring salvation to the fallen. His Wisdom appointed the Plan of Salvation, and the manner of its introduction and discovery to the world. It was no afterthought, but an eternal purpose. The dispensations of the Old Testament prepared the world for its introduction; and its

records make known to us the condition of the race before the Christian era, and the mode in which Divine Holiness has striven with the sinfulness of the human will.

As in the first creation the works of God were very good, so it is the Divine Purpose in all His dealings with men to revive Goodness, and to establish it by a new creation. It was the sin of the finite will which wrought disorder in the universe, and broke the communion between God and man. The harmony of the universe is to be re-established, by the renewal of Divine Life within the soul. The purpose of the Creator was stedfast through long ages of material existence before the creation of man. In the history of intelligent agents it can be no less sure and unchangeable. In the material formation of the world, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," and a well-ordered world stood forth, from that which had been "without form and void." Such will be the issue of His strivings with man in this life of moral disorder.

The Unchanging Law.

3. The great Purpose of Revelation is that which runs through its whole course, and is manifest on every page. And what is this, but to bring men from sin to holiness, from vice to virtue, from the strife of hell to the unity of heaven, from the

love of self to the love of God and man: and to accomplish this through the restoration of the fallen to communion with God in Jesus Christ? That such is the scope of revelation is manifest to every candid reader. LOVE TO GOD AND MAN is the Great Law of the Old Testament and of the New. This is the Law of a creation harmonious with the Creator: the Eternal Law of God. This is the Law of Order, which is set forth under every form of instruction; by example, by precept, by warning, by entreaty; by all the hopes of a happy immortality, and the motives of Divine Love. This is the Law which patriarchs exemplify, and the inspired Lawgiver enunciates, and prophets enforce, and wisdom utters in its proverbs, and psalmists celebrate and sing. This is the Law which Jesus preaches, by Himself and by His Apostles, which He perfectly fulfils on earth, and confirms to His beloved disciple in heavenly visions. This is the Law which is clothed in awful thunders at Sinai, and commended to us by the gentle words of Him, Who does "not strive, nor cry, nor cause His Voice to be heard in the streets." "Glory to God, and peace on earth, and good will to men," is the angels' song at His birth, the desire and intention of his Life, the reward and portion of His Death. It is the Law from Genesis to Revelation; the same Law which the finger of God has written

on the moral nature of man, which man is ever trying to evade, but has never been able to efface.

Forms of human sinfulness.

4. It is to be expected that the dealings of God with moral agents will be conformable to the nature which He has given them. Had He interposed to prevent sin, or to avert its consequences, —if He had at once destroyed a sinful race, He might then have been chargeable with the variableness, of which the enemies of Christianity now seek, but in vain, to accuse Him. His first Design included His purpose with reference to man, both before the fall and after it; and is fulfilled, whatever may be the event. It was His Eternal Will to meet the fall in a special manner, and to deal with the fallen according to a Plan of Infinite Wisdom.

To understand, as far as we may, the work of God in the world, we must always take account of the nature and condition of mankind.

We shall find, if we consider the history of the race, that the love of self, which is so continually in antagonism to the Divine Law, though ever inclined to the same excesses, has assumed three principal forms or disguises, in man's endeavour to conceal from himself his true character and condition. These forms are Idolatry, Pharisaism, and Atheism; and are equivalent to the worship of

false gods, dissembling with the true God, and the denial of all gods.

Idolatry. Its origin.

5. Idolatry was the first disguise of sinfulness in early ages, and still abounds, wherever human selfishness exists in combination with the particular character of mind which can be deluded by it. The revelations of the Old Testament are, for the most part, directed against the idolatrous forms of human sinfulness.

The early prevalence of idolatry is no evidence that man's original condition was that of the savage. That the race was more disposed to this sin in remote than in more recent times, must be admitted. The love of false worship, scarcely restrained by the very Presence of Jehovah, is one of the most striking features of the Israelitish character before the captivity. It may be difficult to give a perfectly satisfactory account of this phase of human error. The most likely would appear to be that the character of the race, like that of individuals, necessarily undergoes some change in the course of time, and the progress of age. The increase of knowledge, the cultivation of arts and sciences, the development of the multifarious resources of life, and the numerous pursuits connected with them, will have similar effects on the general character of mankind, as on that of indi-

viduals. Such pursuits have gone far towards the formation of our national character, so little predisposed to idolatrous practices.

It was otherwise in the first ages of the world. The patriarchal state with its simple customs and manners was the infancy of the race. The freshness of creation, as well as their manner of life, would naturally impress the mind with the magnificence of nature, and accustom it to that contemplation which would give a prominent energy to the imaginative faculties. Such a mental conformation, under the growth of wickedness, and in those who were afraid of the True Creator, would be favourable to the introduction of idolatry.

Some writers have conjectured that, in the early ages, there was a closer relation between man and the concealed forces of nature, than has existed in later times. Modern Spiritualism, as it is called, may perhaps find a resemblance between the ancient worship of rude stones, or Bætyli, with its accompanying magic rites, and the pretended revelations, which have lately become so cheap. But the notion is discountenanced by Humboldt, the most competent judge of such a question. "Closer communication with these so-called children of nature discloses nothing of that superior knowledge of terrestrial forces, which the love of the marvellous has sometimes chosen to ascribe to rude

nations[2]." But, at all events, the high sense of the marvellous, the magnificent, the sublime, which must have belonged to the infancy of the race, would be likely to encourage the notion of spiritual communication, whether true or false; and, under the direction of interested impostors, would lead to that hero-worship and star-worship, which were the earliest forms of idolatry.

Other circumstances in their early history would tend to develope the religious elements of humanity. The first members of the race had seen higher manifestations of the Divine presence than are displayed in nature. Men would be able, for many centuries, to converse with those who had walked with God. Atheism in such a condition was impossible. Pharisaical dissembling would be no less difficult. They could neither deny God, nor imagine Him, as dissemblers do, to be afar off. Yet, while sin continued and increased, they could not believe and worship Him, Whose Word had proved so true in the consequences of sin. Idolatry, or false-worship, would most easily quiet the fears of the guilty soul, while it deluded the religious nature with a counterfeit.

Traditions concerning idolatry.

6. Testimonies, such as the case admits, are not wanting to show that idolatry was not the primi-

[2] Cosmos, vol. ii. p. 113, Sabine's translation.

tive religion of man, but was very early introduced. There is an ancient tradition that Sabæism was one of the first forms of idolatry. Like all human aberrations, it would not be introduced all at once, but by degrees, and, at first, in connexion with true worship. The early adoration of the Bætyli, need not have originated in that gross savage fetishism, which regarded them as Divine. It is more probably accounted for by the natural custom of setting up stones as memorials, and dedicating them to God with some particular ceremony, of which there are instances in the Bible [3].

Early revelations.

7. Profane History is not without its tradition, agreeing with Scripture, that the Flood was a Divine retribution on the wickedness of mankind. Length of life and great physical strength would combine to heighten the impiety and confusion of the Antediluvian world. "The wickedness of man was great;" "the earth was filled with violence." But "preachers of righteousness" were not wanting, nor warnings of impending judgment unheard. From the earliest age, the purpose of God is made known. The finite will is influenced by motives of Divine Goodness and Judgment, but cannot with impunity resist the In-

[3] Gen. xxviii. 18; xxxv. 14. Josh. iv. 8, 9, &c.

finite. The worker of violence may bring destruction upon himself, but God will establish a kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The flood was a warning to future ages; but did not terminate the probation of man, nor accomplish the Divine purpose in the world. The Old Testament records those Dealings of God with human nature, by which it has pleased Him both to educate the race, and to save them from the ruin to which their own wilfulness was tending; and so to advance His design in the Plan of Salvation.

Double purpose of the Old Testament.

8. In studying the several books of the Old Testament, it is important to keep in view that they all had two purposes to fulfil; one temporary and national, the other permanent and universal.

It is not necessary that we should know the reasons for the choice of one nation out of all, by which the whole race has been instructed. But when we know that such has been the Divine pleasure, it is probable that revelation will be addressed to them nationally, and its dispensations introduced under circumstances likely to bind them together as a people, and to separate them from other nations. This observation may explain passages of Scripture which, judged, as they sometimes are, without this reference, may appear to be "trifling,"

or "national," or "beneath the high region" to which the soul would soar. We must take account of the times and circumstances under which the various books were written, and the state of those to whom they were addressed. The intelligent and moral nature of mankind had sunk to a low condition, previously to the commencement of the Jewish economy; and has been raised, through the influences of revelation, and especially of Christianity. It may therefore be very unreasonable to complain that this or that passage of the book by which God has educated the race, is beneath what we should expect.

Nor can any objection to the Divine Wisdom be founded on the national spirit of the Old Testament. Granted that the Law and the Prophets received a low and selfish interpretation from the Jews, and were viewed through a medium of "national prejudice and vanity;" yet this was their sin, according to Scripture itself, and became in the end their destruction. Granted that, in the fulfilment of God's purpose, to make them a chosen people, their Scriptures are full of national events and national appeals; yet can it be otherwise, if the human race is to be instructed by the history of One Nation, and by God's dealings with them? And there is in all these Scriptures a deeper meaning, too clear to be mistaken, and which it was at

last their ruin to have overlooked. The Christian, at least, has no difficulty in understanding the passages which speak of glory and peace to Israel, but anticipate their fulfilment in the peace and glory of "the Israel of God."

The chosen people.

9. Every reader of the Old Testament must have perceived, that the supernatural interpositions of Divine Providence were constantly directed to the suppression of idolatry and the moral improvement of man, while they also anticipate a fuller and brighter revelation of light and power to be discovered in a future age.

According to the Scriptural account, the people from whom the patriarch Abraham was called, while they still possessed the knowledge of the True God, were gradually sinking into idolatry[4]. The early history of Abraham and his descendants is that of a people, whom the Almighty had appointed to fulfil His Will, and who must therefore pass through those trying and stirring events, which were sure to strengthen and improve their national character. Their sojourn in Egypt; their pollution with its idolatries; their fellowship in suffering; their marvellous deliverance with signs and wonders, and the predicted conquest of Canaan;

[4] Josh. xxiv. 2, &c.

and these too, with manifest judgments upon the idolatrous practices of those people[5]; the dispensation from Sinai; the perils of the wilderness; the destruction of the tribes of Canaan, who were sunk to the extremity of moral perdition;—these were circumstances calculated to bind them together in strong bonds, as the peculiar people of Jehovah, to convince them that the gods of the heathen were no gods, and that there is no God but the Lord. Their moral Law so familiar to us, and, we are apt to think, so easily discovered by conscience, was truly a revealed law to them. There is an old tradition that, from the beginning of the world, a revelation of moral duties was given to man. But the great law of Love, though that of the patriarchal religion, and of every dispensation, was a new commandment to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. Indeed though old in the letter, it is still, after these thousands of years, a new commandment in practice. If it had gained a more general influence in the world, or even in the Church, mankind would not now be distracted as they are, by the idolatry, the pharisaism, the atheism which abound.

The ceremonial law of the Jews, with its burdensome ceremonies, was full of emblems and

[5] Wisdom xii. 27.

symbols, which could not but remind them that something was intended beyond the meaning of the letter. Their history was a perpetual training, in opposition to the propensities of heathenism. Their geographical position was well adapted for their mission as teachers of mankind. Their very character and estimation in the world, despised and detested as they were, is a proof to every succeeding age, that a religion which emanated from them, must have made its way by its own merits, to gain to itself the philosophic Greek, and the proud citizen of Rome. Their condition to this very day as a distinct people, after their long dispersion, and their many vicissitudes, is a proof that God has not dealt with them as with other nations, but has had some special design in their history. They have exhibited to the world, during many ages, the fulfilment of two prophecies, which, without them, would have been thought contradictory. They are "scattered among all nations," and yet they "dwell alone." (Numb. xxiii. 9; Deut. xxviii. 64.)

An impugner of Christianity has said, that "mankind stood in need of one to instruct them." Let him try to separate from the world's history all the influences which have flowed from Palestine; and he may find reason to confess that God has instructed mankind during ages past, and that

systematically, by means of this nation. As their national Head He often addressed them nationally, and in a manner calculated to excite a national spirit; but the event has proved that the chief purpose of the Almighty was to make them the instructers of the human race, and through the house of David, to bring salvation to mankind.

The nations of Canaan.

10. The destruction of the nations of Canaan has been a common source of objection and difficulty. Modern writers often represent it as repugnant to the moral instincts of human nature. But, as regards the Divine Conduct in these events, it is not inconsistent, as it has often been answered, with eternal morality, that fire or sword, any more than earthquake or pestilence, should exterminate a people sunk in hopeless wickedness, and sold to enormities of vice and crime. The objection here brought against the Old Testament applies also to the revelation of Divine Judgments in the New, and will generally be found to go along with that false notion of the Divine Character, which overlooks the Judgments of the Almighty as a Moral Governor, and represents Him as a Being of pure Benevolence.

And with reference to the employment of human agents, it is difficult to discover any thing more chargeable with immorality in the extirpation of a

people utterly base and corrupted, than in the punishment of a malefactor by death. The difference between the cases is not one of right or wrong, but of man's competency and authority to be the judge. The community may judge the individual, and perhaps it would not, even in the present day, be held immoral for a congress of nations to decide, whether the existence of a horde of incorrigible pirates or savages were compatible with the welfare of mankind. This then is, at all events, a point on which the Divine Command would decide, without compromise of the moral law.

The frequent difficulties and objections upon this subject, are, for the most part, of little weight or importance. On the contrary, the heavy Displeasure of God, in the severe punishment of the nations of Canaan, was an impressive lesson in the moral education of the Israelites. It was a solemn national warning of Divine Wrath upon the authors of confusion and mischief,—a warning which could not be forgotten with impunity; but which it is now convenient to call immoral, because it might otherwise afford presumption of a righteous judgment to come.

Divine Goodness under the Old Testament.

11. The manifestations of Divine Love to the chosen people are manifest throughout the Old

Testament. As the affections of the heart are a natural evidence of the Character of the Creator, so the Great law,—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," implies the promise of God's Love to man. It is manifested in all His dealings with Israel, in His Longsuffering, His many mercies, the touching appeals addressed to them; and in all the instances of His regard, summed up in the question of the prophet,—"What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" But the Divine Goodness always looked beyond the immediate events. It is the truth of Scripture, what may be confirmed by reason and experience, that the whole human family has been instructed and elevated by these supernatural aids. Without the early and frequent interposition of Heaven, partly in the means of external instruction, partly in that Unseen Presence of God with man, which is the fruit of Universal Redemption, there would have been no relief to the deep and plaintive sorrow of the first years of degeneracy, no recovery from utter ruin, in the subsequent stages of perverse wickedness. The early age would have sunk in distraction and despair, unless God had given hope to the fallen. Later ages would have realized that worst curse which can happen to man, —"He is joined to idols, let him alone;" and the

world would never have heard of a natural development or progress.

Extent of human degeneracy.

12. The history of the race, so far as it can be understood, bears testimony to the truth of Scripture, that all good is of God, and that man, without God, ever increases in the miserable fruits of evil. The perverted affections, the conscience smothered to extinction, the darkened understanding, the heart past feeling, and—what to civilized man is the last worst stage of all—the love of sin for its own sake,—the state of those who not only practise abominations, but have pleasure in them that do them;—these, and that yet deeper depth of human wretchedness,—the savage state, in which reason as well as conscience has been lost, and only vile affections, and animal force remain, —are different stages of the degeneracy of man. To understand his real condition, considered in itself, without taking account of the remedial measures provided by Divine Goodness, it would be necessary to see with the eyes of God, when He looked down from Heaven, and pronounced mankind to be "altogether abominable." He can behold the work of man, without seeing it every where checked and restrained by His Own Work for man: He can see the effects of sinfulness, as they must be seen to be rightly estimated, not

as they are diverted from their course by His Divine interference, and appear to advantage in the light which is none of their own, but as they would have been, had there been "none to help," and man had been left to the fruits of his own ways.

It is a common truth, that the germs of every vice are to be found in the heart. The same faculties are always capable of the same perversions. There is no deed so impious or so odious, but any man may be brought to it by a course of wickedness without restraint. Many have lived to perpetrate the deed and to glory in it, which was once too fearful to be thought of. Even the generous and virtuous qualities of the heart are retained through the mercy of God in Redemption. Without supernatural aid, all the good powers of human nature must have been perverted to evil: the wicked dispositions must have broken into full play; vile and malignant passions would have overpowered resistance. The first chapter of Romans would have been no partial picture of mankind, and would have fallen short of the terrible reality. No race of beings could have continued long in the vile lusts of unredeemed man: none could have indulged the dæmoniac rage of fiends, unless gifted with their immortality. No flood nor fire of heaven

had been needed. The earth had long since been a solitude. Man had long since been his own destroyer; and none would have questioned the literal truth, that death was the immediate consequence of sin.

CHAPTER VIII.

REDEMPTION: THE GREAT MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE WISDOM, HOLINESS, AND LOVE.

Redemption and the fall; correlative doctrines.

1. It is a common but mistaken outcry, that the Christian doctrines are inconsistent with one another. But the impugners of Scripture appear to be aware of the consistency between the Fall of man and the Atonement for sin. It will be found that they uniformly go together, and are either both received or both rejected. If man commenced from a low imperfect condition by the appointment of the Creator, he must aim at the accomplishment of his destiny, whatever that may be, in the strength of his own powers and energies; and can no more need a Divine Saviour from evil, than the material world would need the descent of a star from the firmament, to direct it in the progressions of ages. But if he were created in the Divine Image, and possessed

an original Divine life, which he has forfeited through sin; it is consistent, that he cannot renew this life through any effort of his own.

No part of the Christian system has furnished the occasion for objections so constant, as that of the Atonement for sin. Like most other objections to Christianity, they apply to the Scriptural revelation of the Divine Character. It has not been left to the present age, to find new difficulties or new defences of this cardinal doctrine. But objections long since silenced, which have hidden themselves for a time, to come to light again with the freshness and the boldness of novelties, may safely be met with the weapons which have been successful before.

Consequences of sin unknown.

2. In answer to them, it was argued by Bp. Butler[1], that we cannot possibly know what, in the nature of things, will be the consequences of sin; whether they follow as natural and necessary consequences, or as determined by the Necessary Attributes of God; and that we have no right to expect that any thing we could do would be sufficient to avert them. The argument admits of no answer. We have not that knowledge of the constitution of things, which can justify objec-

[1] Analogy, part ii. chap. vi.

tions to the Divine plans concerning us. We cannot search the depths of the human constitution, and discover the connexion between the will, and the other powers of being. Nor can we understand the relation of these powers to the Self-existent Being. Beyond question the effects may be irremediable, except through a Renewed Energy from the Source of life, when once the will of the creature has been turned against the Will of the Creator. And we cannot know how the evil may be averted, nor constitute ourselves judges of the Divine Conduct in the Plan of Salvation.

It changes man's relations to God.

3. We may know however that our existence and well-being are dependent upon our moral relations to God, and that these relations are disturbed by our sinfulness. The relations between the creature and the Creator must, at first, depend upon the Character of the Creator. But when the life of the creature has continued, they depend also upon his own character. We have seen it to be an anticipation of reason, that the Most High and Holy will be the Author of a good creation, and will have complacency in the perfection of His works. His Divine Power is glorified, when He sees all that He has made and pronounces it to be very good. His Holiness

is that Eternal Attribute, in which rest the Eternal Laws of Universal Order, to which He requires His moral creatures to be conformed. To commit sin is to oppose the Holiness of God: but, since man cannot comprehend the Divine Nature, it follows that revelation alone can inform him of the effects of sin, upon the moral relations between himself and his Creator. The Scriptures continually speak of *the Wrath of God*, and regard all sin as an offence to Him. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" as though He turned away from it, as man will turn from what is odious. Whatever be the full meaning of this language, in its application to the Divine Nature, it is manifest that it expresses some change in the relation between God and man, which the sinner cannot expect to obviate by his own efforts.

Spiritual life.

4. But there is a constant doctrine of Scripture, and it is a probable truth of natural religion, which makes it still more evident that we are incompetent judges of the Divine Conduct in the plan of salvation. This doctrine is that of the Real Spiritual Communion between the Creator and His sinless or reconciled creatures. What is life:—what are the relations in being between Creator and creature:—are questions which man

may ask but cannot answer. This however he may know, that life is something beyond his sphere of agency, and cannot be prolonged by his word or will. He lives, he knows not how; he is neither self-originated, nor self-dependent; he cannot dive down to the fountain of his being, nor tell so much as whether it lies wholly within himself, and distinct from all other creatures[2]. Life, in its full real meaning, which includes more than is discovered in sense or consciousness, is something he does not possess of his own. Every power is derived, every faculty is conferred by God: and it is quite consistent with reason, that the perversion of the powers of life may alienate some of those powers, and change a man to the very depths of his being. To think otherwise is to imagine that the Creator has made us to be self-sufficient, and that we might dwell eternally alone. It is to regard Him as no longer the Sovereign of His creation.

If such an hypothesis be absurd, if He have created us to have some relations to Himself and to other created beings, it must follow that Scripture is in every way consistent with reason, in its

[2] The argument is at least as old as Athanasius. Πῶς τολμῶσιν οἱ δυσσεβεῖς φλυαρεῖν ἃ μὴ θέμις, ἄνθρωποι ὄντες, καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐχ εὑρίσκοντες διηγήσασθαι; τί δὲ λέγω τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς; τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἡμῖν εἰπάτωσαν, εἰ ἄρα εὑρεῖν δυνήσονται τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἐξιχνιάσαι φύσιν. (On Matt. xi. 27.)

doctrine, that the full spiritual life can belong to those only whose wills are in harmony with the Will of God. It is as probable as it is Scriptural, if it be not even self-evident, that the life of the creature, in all its powers and energies, secret and manifest, must be in some way dependent upon his use of those independent faculties which he has received from the Creator. How then can reason object to the Scriptural doctrines of spiritual death, and the renewal of Divine life by Jesus Christ?

We have, in fact, as good reason to believe that our deep relations of being to God, must be changed by opposition to His Law, as that we possess any distinctness of being. Human reason has been prone to think that the Great Source of life must ever be the spring of all power, and that the streams of finite life, though they may seem to be cut off, yet flow on equably and unbroken. Free-will, with its facts of evil, comes in to correct the speculation, and discovers that the finite are not mere energies of the Infinite. But this evidence of our distinctness of being from God does not apply, in its full extent, to those who are at one with God in their conduct.

Such probable arguments of natural reason are consistent, as far as they go, with the fundamental truth of Scripture, that "the *wages* of sin is death,

but the *gift* of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Man needs a Saviour.

5. For it follows from the doctrine of spiritual death, that man can neither recover life by his own power, nor know by what means it can be restored to him. He cannot even think it unreasonable, that resistance of the Infinite must be the death of all energy to the finite. Enmity to God must be something fearful; and, if reason alone must be the guide, we may as easily conjecture that it must be without remedy, as that it can at once be remedied by any human effort. Perhaps we should not be far wrong, if, from the existence, in a state of trial, of a race universally sinful, we were to infer that there has been a Divine interposition for its rescue. But, at all events, it cannot be ascertained, by any means, that a change of conduct will undo all the effects of the past. Man can have no more right to expect that the soul's life can be renewed, when it has been lost, than that he can restore health or life to the body after he has destroyed it by dissolute courses, or by his wilful act. Reason concurs with Scripture that he may break the harmony of the Divine creation, but cannot renew it; that he may wander from God at his will, but cannot return when he may please; and needs supernatural aid for the

restoration of his spiritual life, no less than for the commencement of existence, or to call back a Lazarus from the grave [3].

The doctrine is above criticism.

6. Objections to the doctrine of Redemption generally rest on false views of the competency of man's moral judgment. On such a subject the Divine Conduct cannot be within the reach of human criticism. The important principle was clearly stated by Bp. Butler. "Not only the reason of the thing, but the whole analogy of nature, should teach us not to expect to have the like information concerning the Divine Conduct, as concerning our own duty [4]." We cannot sufficiently know those principles of eternal morality, which have their foundation in the Divine Nature, to be able to apply them, in judgment of His dealings with a fallen world. We have not acquaintance with universal nature, to perceive the effects of the fall, or to pronounce what will be the agency of Infinite Holiness and Love to the fallen. Human reason, or human morality, is quite inapplicable to the questions. They may well involve "things into which angels desire to look." The

[3] So Athanasius has, de Incarn. c. x;—*Οὐκ ἄλλου ἦν ἀπὸ τῆς γενομένης φθορᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀνενεγκεῖν, ἢ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου τοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν πεποιηκότος αὐτούς.*

[4] Analogy, part ii. chap. v.

Work of Redemption is as far beyond us as that of creation. Creation is the beginning of life: Redemption its renewal. Creation is the sending forth of a mysterious energy from the Infinite, which gives being to a world of harmony and order: redemption averts the consequences of evil, and restores the broken harmony of a fallen world, by a renewed Energy of Divine Life.

Objections to this doctrine.

7. Objections to this vital doctrine, similar to those of several writers of the day, are thus stated by Mr. James Martineau:—"That He should select for His condition of salvation a doctrine which is not only unsupported by any analogy of nature, but absolutely contradicted by all; which is metaphysically absurd, for guilt and innocence are no more transferable than intellect and eyesight; which is morally absurd, for it represents Christ as crucified under remorse for the sins of men, which He never committed, and of which, therefore, He had neither memory nor consciousness; which denies the moral excellence of God, for it represents Him as conferring boundless blessedness on the wicked, and venting the tempest of infinite vengeance on spotless innocence . . . may be admitted when language ceases to have meaning, and reason abdicates its seat[t]."

[t] Rationale, p. 83

On this passage it may be observed:—First, it was shown by Bp. Butler that the doctrine is supported by analogies of nature; and it may suffice to refer to his chapter upon this topic[6]. Secondly, the Christian doctrine is very unfairly stated in these remarks. Holy Scripture speaks of a transference of suffering, and teaches that the Sufferings and Death of Christ brought salvation to mankind; but this is something very different from a transference of guilt and innocence; and can neither be shown to imply it, nor deduced together with it from the Bible. No intelligent Christian can understand the doctrine of the atonement to imply a transference of guilt and innocence, or that Christ "was crucified under remorse for the sins of men." Still farther is the doctrine misstated, when it is said to represent God as conferring "boundless blessedness on the wicked." To be at one with God, is to be at one with Eternal Holiness. The whole tenor of Scripture, from first to last, confirms the distinct and positive statements of many passages, that the purpose of Christ's Death was to deliver the wicked "from the power of sin and Satan," and to make them "zealous of good works." And when it is said that vengeance has fallen upon Innocence, it must be remembered that the Lamb

[6] Analogy, part ii. chap. v.

of God is Himself One with the Father, and is also the voluntary Propitiation for our sins. Like the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the deliverance of the Son to death is beyond the finite understanding; since it necessarily depends upon the Eternal relations of the Divine Persons, and on that Unsearchable Love of which the Son has spoken,—"Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

But farther. Has not the writer carried the judgment of man evidently beyond its province? For surely it cannot presume to trace back the Divine Conduct to the Divine Nature; nor to see how it is compatible with Infinite Perfections. Mr. Parker has a just observation upon this point: would that he had acted as he professes. "I shall not undertake to discuss the psychology and metaphysics of God. The metaphysics of man are quite hard enough for me to grapple with and understand." He might have added, the morality of God and man. That which falls within the human sphere is quite hard enough for us. It is often very difficult for the most upright to steer his way through the dangers and deceits of life. It may take all his thoughts and all his attention to know what is right in many cases of conduct, and to perceive the course of the Divine Order. It may well exceed the highest intelligence to

judge the morality of the Divine procedure, in its application of Eternal Laws to a fallen world. That Divine Agency which renews the harmony of creation is consistent with Eternal Holiness: but can man know how it is to be renewed? That Work of God is good which removes the blight of evil from the moral and essential relations of God and man: but can man know how it is to be removed? That Interference of the Creator in the life of man is merciful and righteous, which restores spiritual life to the dead in sins: but can man know how it is to be restored? He must first have searched both the depths of his own nature, and the Eternal Attributes of the Creator. Here, as often, the words of Wisdom are full of truth;—"Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things: but the things that are in heaven, who hath searched out: and Thy Counsel who hath known[7]?"

Confirmations of the doctrine. Conscience.

8. The Divine Conduct in the Redemption of the world is thus wholly beyond the criticism of reason. The revelation of the Divine Perfections in Scripture, and especially in the doctrines of Christianity, is consistent with the inferences of

[7] Wisdom ix. 16.

natural theology. The Christian's God is therefore both the God of nature, and the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. It scarcely falls within our subject, to examine the direct evidences which confirm the doctrine of the Atonement. But its importance may justify a short notice of some of them.

The doctrine is supported by the testimony of Conscience. The soul is naturally borne down with remorse and fear under the sense of sin, unless it can know that sin has been put away. It often feels that there is something in sin, which God alone can undo, and is naturally afraid of coming into His Presence, before it has been forgiven. Under this anxiety, it is little disposed to sit in judgment on the method of deliverance. It may find indications also in the powers and capacities, as well as in the remorse of conscience, that supernatural aid is needed for its perfection. Nothing is more remarkable in human nature, nor of more constant experience, than its combination of strength with weakness, of noble faculties and aspirations with low desires and debasing slothfulness. Man learns in the experience of life that he cannot, in his own strength, work out the destiny which is set before him in his own moral constitution. He needs that aid and encouragement from One Mighty to save, which the Gospel pro-

fesses to afford. How entirely it meets his wants, and directs his energies, and moves him with influences which he can feel to be Divine, is a conviction of the Christian life, founded on the Great Work of Christ for man; and affords an evidence, of which the force cannot be exhibited in any argument.

Custom of sacrifice.

9. The universal prevalence of the custom of sacrifice, has often been alleged in confirmation of this doctrine. Holy Scripture gives the only probable account of it. The atheist may think he sets aside its testimony, by calling it "the old barbarous idea of satisfaction by death [8]." He denies the truthfulness of man's religious nature, and is not bound by any laws of reason. To call it a great illusion, or a natural madness, is an easy way of disposing of every fact of consciousness or of history, which may be found to be inconvenient. But the theist who sees that truth must lie beneath all the monstrous systems of Pagan theology, cannot consistently refuse to inquire whether there is any thing in human nature, which would be likely to give rise to such a custom. Mr. Martineau has just assured us of the contrary; and with truth. The transfer of punishment is not a natural, nor a

[8] Christianity and Secularism, p. 134.

probable idea of the human mind. The custom cannot then have originated with human nature. It must have come to man from without. Revelation assures us that it did. Its account is reasonable and agrees with facts. The notion of expiation could never have gained currency in the world, if development had been the true theory of human history. But if sacrifice were a positive institution of the Creator in the first age; the dreadful customs of false religions,—the offering of children to Moloch, the human hecatombs offered, with shocking atrocity, to the fiend of the Mexicans, become intelligible as its abuse by a debased and degenerate people.

The Desire of all nations.

10. The general expectation of mankind, before the Christian era, that a Teacher and Deliverer was to be revealed from heaven, is another confirmation of the Christian doctrine. There are passages to this effect in Virgil and Tacitus, which are sufficiently remarkable to excite a feeling of the supernatural. But evidences of the Desire of all nations are drawn from remote periods and from people far separated from one another. "The Persian legislator predicts the appearance of a personage, who should establish a religion pure and immutable; to whom kings should be obedient, and under his empire, peace should prevail and

discord cease. Confucius attests the same event, and proclaims that 'in the West the Holy One shall arise.' The followers of Brahma put into the mouth of their incarnate God the remarkable declaration, 'I am the sacrifice, I am the victim.' The middle divinity of the Gothic mythology is represented as obtaining a victory over death and sin, but at the expense of his own life [9]."

Concurrent prophecies.

11. But the chief evidence of the doctrine is, of course, to be derived from the Scriptures. One of the many proofs that the Bible is the Inspired Word of God, is to be found in the concurrent prophecies of the Old Testament, which look to a future Guide and Saviour of mankind. He is foretold as the Blessing of all nations to Abraham; the Shiloh of Jacob; the Prophet like unto Moses at Sinai; the True Paschal Lamb; the Star of Balaam; the Lord our Righteousness in Jeremiah; the One Shepherd David of Ezekiel; Daniel's Son of Man, and Most Holy, and Messiah; the Ruler of Micah; the Glory of the latter temple in Haggai; the Branch of Zechariah; the Lord of the messenger and the Sun of Righteousness in Malachi; in Isaiah, the Immanuel, the Mighty God, the Branch from the Root of Jesse, the Man

[9] Carwithen's Bampton's Lectures, 1813.

of Sorrows, Who hath done no violence, neither was deceit found in His Mouth, yet bears the iniquity of others, and pours out His Soul unto death, and makes intercession for the transgressors [1].

Practical efficacy of the doctrine.

12. The great doctrine of the Christian system, the Atonement for sin by the Humiliation and Passion of the Son of God, is constantly set forth in Scripture, and has always been regarded by Christians, as the chief manifestation to created beings of the Holiness and Love of the Most High. It answered long-felt anticipations and wants of mankind, as well as the desires of prophets and righteous men, who pondered the Divine purpose afar off, in the mysterious intimations of early prophecies. It has now, for two thousand years, been the corner stone of a system, often misrepresented by enemies, often misunderstood by friends, and perverted to mischief,—as what may not?—by wicked and designing men, but which has taught and teaches many who are never heard of beyond their humble but peaceful sphere of life, to live as if every action were of infinite consequence; and to die, as if life on earth were but the childhood of a life eternal.

[1] The Old Testament prophecies are quoted in this manner by Justin M. Trypho, cap. 126.

And this, after all, is the test of its power. The Religion of Jesus has had a mighty influence in the world. It has awakened the intellect of nations, it has lent inspiration to genius, and kindled the enthusiasm of poetry and art. It has stirred the benevolence of the philanthropist, and has given heroic endurance to the martyr, and ennobling principles of action to men famous in their generation. These are a portion of its fruits. But awakened intellect has often been wielded by depravity, and the sacred powers of genius and art have pandered to the tyrant and the profligate. The grossest delusions have had their martyrs, and atheists have deserved honour for their humanity. The growth of civilization is one fruit of Christianity, but it has had an influence exclusively its own. It has made men virtuous in humble life, and patient and loving in obscurity,—virtuous, and patient, and loving, not merely on the impulses of transient feelings, but on the goodness of habitual principle,—not merely through a natural good heart, but by the conquest of a bad one. It has given good feeling to the rude, and intelligence to the unlearned, and directed the feelings and intelligence to objects worthy of man, because higher than himself. It has made many poor and unknown to be pure as true priests, and honourable as kings, for it has

made them kings and priests to the Most High. It has imparted, through many a life of trial, that joy and peace which flow from God within the soul; till the spirit was breathed out to Him Who gave it, in the assurance, as well founded as any that man can have, that to depart hence was to realize perfectly in heaven the love, joy, peace, which had already been attained upon earth.

They who have experienced its power are not perplexed, that they cannot solve all the questions which may be asked upon the Counsels of the Eternal. Why God could not pardon sin without an Atonement; how the suffering of the Just for the unjust can bring us to God; these are not questions for man to answer or to ask. Why demand an explanation of His Work in Redemption, any more than of His Work in Creation? When man shall have comprehended the life of the body; how the constituent elements take counsel together, for the formation of the marvellous human frame; how the vital cells become possessed of their wonderful properties; and whence it is, that the living soul becomes the inhabitant of clay; he may then begin to search how it is that the death of the Redeemer was necessary, for renewing the spiritual life of a fallen race. When man shall have embraced within the little circle of his knowledge, the Eternal Laws of the Universal Order;

when he shall have fathomed the deep sky with its million suns, or the deeper depth of his own soul; or, rather, when he shall have comprehended the whole nature of the Infinite; he will be warranted in affirming that this or that mode of agency is more consistent with Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; and may expect to reconcile the laws of the Divine Conduct with those laws of human morality, subordinate, yet also Divine, which are to regulate his conduct in his own proper sphere.

It is but the wayward ignorance of a wilful child, when a creature of yesterday at one moment declares it "presumptuous to look through nature up to nature's God," and is content to stand, "with wistful and unsatisfactory curiosity, on the shores of eternity," professing, "in the profound sense of his own littleness to check the dogmatic spirit," and presently can affirm dogmatically that "the atonement by the Death of Christ is unsatisfactory as a scheme." It is to say that the view of nature and of man cannot discover, that the Infinite is a Spirit of Life; yet must unfold all the Mysteries of Infinite Being. It is to be blind to the things that are upon earth, dogmatic upon the things that are in heaven.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ supplies the defects of natural religion, and meets the wants of human nature. It both conquers the sense of guilt, and

carries with it an inspiring power of well-doing. And this, in Scripture, is the proof that Christianity is possessed, and is the touchstone of its genuineness. To separate pardon and peace from the power of holiness, is to substitute for the true religion of Jesus an odious counterfeit, to fall from Christianity to that Pharisaism, which includes some of the most destructive delusions of false religion. "All unrighteousness is sin." All immorality is sin. Sin brought death into the world. The Son of God destroys death, by destroying sin. He does not "comfort where He ought not." He does not "confer blessedness on the wicked." He brings men "from darkness to light, from the power of sin and Satan unto God." He has descended from heaven, and has lived and died as a man, that men may "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and may "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

The Mystery of Godliness is the very assurance of its truth, the foundation of its hopes. A God altogether within our knowledge could not give happiness that passeth knowledge. In such a Being, there could be no depth of Wisdom or Goodness, nothing but what must soon be exhausted, nothing suitable to beings immortal and progressive. Beneath the surface of things visible, both thought and feeling stretch to depths

infinite and unknown. But all things are in Him, Who is both "God and Saviour." "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Of that fulness His saints "receive, and grace for grace."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FINAL CONSEQUENCES OF EVIL, CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

Comparison of temporal and eternal evil.

1. COMMON and plausible objections to the revelation of the Moral Attributes of God, are derived from the Scriptural doctrine, of the eternal consequences of sin. It is sometimes discussed as freely, and decided as confidently, as if it were the plainest and simplest of all subjects. And yet it may be expected to be of all the most difficult. The existence of evil in the world is the great problem of religious philosophy; its future and ultimate results cannot but present still more intricate questions.

Although the evidences of the Being of God are, in no degree, invalidated by the existence of evil, yet it must be admitted that the facts of evil are what reason, without experience, would not have anticipated from its conceptions of the

Infinite Being. One who has always lived in happy circumstances, and has seen nothing of the ills of life, would perhaps expect that all the works of a Great and Good Creator must be in perfect order, and all the creatures as happy as himself. Suppose him then, at length, to move abroad, and to pass through the varied scenes of human life in the world. He must soon be thrown back to an examination of his principles. He has found nothing to justify the irrational course of atheism; which exaggerates the ills and woes of life, and concludes that there can be no God over all. The evidences of natural theology remain in all their force, to demonstrate the Being of a Great Creative Spirit, and even to establish the truth of His Infinite Perfections. Yet there can be little doubt that the evils of human life are not what reason, unguided by experience, would have anticipated from conceptions of the Supreme Being.

In the question of the final consequences of evil, the case is different. Here, as before, the notion of Infinite Power and Goodness may lead to the inference, that sin and suffering must have an end; but the reasoner cannot be confronted with any eternal consequences, and required to take account of them as facts. Experience shows us the existence of evil in the world, but we can

have no experience of its future, much less its eternal results. It would seem to follow then, that dogmatic confidence must be out of place on such a subject. The arguments of natural theology can be no more than probable: revelation alone can decide.

May sin be eternal?

2. In considering *the probable conclusions* of reason and experience, the great question is not so much the permanence of suffering, as that of sin. That continued depravity must carry with it continued wretchedness, is a certain, if it be not an identical truth. Can it be known then that all sin will ultimately give place to goodness; or is there an incorrigible sin? To examine the question on natural principles is to estimate recent criticisms of Revelation. It should be too momentous a question, to be discussed in a cold unfeeling spirit.

Present judgment upon evil.

3. Experience discovers that sin and depravity have their immediate consequences. It is evident from the growth of habit, and the formation of the dispositions and character, that some change is wrought by the conduct in the unseen nature of the soul. It has been observed, at some length, that all knowledge, and all the faculties, can be traced to certain ultimate elements, of which no

further account can be given. In the commencement of self-conscious life, man finds himself possessed of certain faculties and principles of knowledge, adapted to the world in which he lives; but cannot discover how they have been formed, nor how they act, nor trace them to an absolute commencement. Search as he may, there is always within the soul, or beneath it, some depth lying beyond the reach of reflection, in which originates the life of thought and feeling, and where the principles of knowledge have their foundation. This may account for the difficulty of ascertaining and defining first principles. Arguments often fail to reconcile differences of opinion, because men differ in fundamental principles of judgment, which may not have been ascertained, and which may lie beyond the reach of observation.

It must be in this depth of life, that the moral conduct produces its unknown effects. How the change may be effected, and what may be its nature, is beyond our knowledge. But although we cannot trace the connexions of being and action,—though we cannot see how, or where, in the fountain of life, or the springs of conduct, the free agency of man flows in to originate, to modify, or to direct,—yet it is certain that the effects of the conduct upon the soul extend beyond the reach of observation and consciousness.

There is something solemn,—it may be said, with soberness, there is something awful in the thought. Men do evil from day to day, without feeling or fear of consequences. But God sleeps not. His laws are never obsolete nor inefficient, and are working out the fatal results of sin, in those who are least sensible of their operation.

It may thus be said to be a truth of natural religion, that there is a present and immediate judgment within the soul, upon every deed of man. The Judge is always sitting, and his decisions are those of Omniscience, and are executed in unerring laws of nature. The Author and Preserver of the stupendous material frame of things, is the Preserver of the souls of all, and meets every contingency of spiritual life, in laws which operate with the certainty and precision of the laws of visible nature. The decision may be heard in conscience, or may be drowned in a turbulent mind; but, heard or not, it is executed in laws which meet every event of human conduct, and cannot be changed by any act of man.

There is therefore but a partial resemblance between human and Divine Judgment. It cannot be thought that every sin moves the Judge of the earth to a new act of vengeance, unexpected by Himself; or that retribution follows transgression

by arbitrary appointment, as the punishment of a criminal is by arbitrary enactment of human law. The Divine Agency, wherever it can be traced, is through laws of nature. Divine Law is not arbitrary, but rests on eternal reasons, and is executed through the very powers of being. God is no finite designer who must make some new effort, and be prepared with some new expedient, to meet each contingency which may arise. He sees "the end from the beginning," and provides for all things from the first. As His First Creative Fiat includes all the events of material causation, so the first communication of power to finite beings, carries along with it the unerring and abiding agency, by which He meets and recompenses their conduct. The happiness of well-doing, the misery of wrong-doing are as inseparable from the power of action, as, in all human agency, the motive is inseparable from the act of will. As the law is fixed, and every influence already acting, which draws the falling stone to the ground, so is the law fixed, and every influence in action, which brings retribution to the doer of evil.

Future judgment.

4. It cannot be assumed however that the laws of spiritual being, any more than those of visible nature, contain in themselves all the causal poten-

cies of future being; or are executed, even in their ordinary course, without the Immediate Presence and Agency of the Creator. The Ways of the Infinite are ever beyond knowledge; the relation of the first creation to the continued Providence, ever unsearchable. But it is credible, that there may be extraordinary events in the spiritual, as well as in the material world. Such an event, indeed, is the passage of the spirit from the human life. Like the occasional stars of astronomy, and the new species of geology, it is miraculous with reference to the common laws of nature; though all such events may be included in a higher nature of more comprehensive laws, which may, in fact, extend to the Universal Agency of the Creator Himself. It is equally credible that beyond death there is a Judgment, or an immediate manifestation of the Deity to His creatures. This truth of revelation is, in no sense, inconsistent with any laws of material or spiritual nature.

The soul changed by depravity.

5. It is manifest, from the obvious laws of spiritual life, that man cannot know the present injury of wickedness. It must therefore be much more difficult to ascertain its final consequences. The Word of God, in Conscience and in Scripture, declares both loudly and distinctly, that none can do evil with impunity; but natural religion can

make no discovery of the manifestations of future judgment.

But although no man can know the effects of evil upon himself, in changing the qualities of his nature; yet in those effects of depravity, which are manifested in every immoral and vicious life, there is enough to indicate that sin *may* lead to endless mischief. We need not penetrate to the inmost nature of the soul, to understand the common language of experience, that man is degraded or debased by wickedness. The hardened heart and the seared conscience are familiar words, and express too familiar truths. They are seldom the growth of early years, but are common states with the aged. To the end of life, the meanness, the knavery, the lust, the selfishness of the bad man, become more and more inveterate. So that, even if that could be thought true, which "the fool hath said in his heart," there is still something to be feared in the plain facts of life, and in the issue of laws which are before his eyes. For surely it cannot be safe, to be naturally sensitive to distinctions of right and wrong, to be capable of good feelings and high aspirations; yet to live in defiance of conscience; to be subject, through life, to low desires, and engrossed in sordid pursuits; to become more and more callous and indifferent, as life advances; and, at length, when the generous and

benevolent affections have long been withered, moral principles uprooted, the lofty aspirations quelled and subdued; when the loving and good spirit, of which every man is capable, is already dead; then to pass hence, without thought or concern for a life of mischief past, without fear of its issues in the future; as if it were the end of man to perish in that earth, above which he had never sought to raise himself.

Opportunity of moral improvement.

6. The case becomes still more serious, when human life is considered as preparatory to a life to come. We have already noticed some of the evidences that it is fitted to be a state of moral improvement, and, both in the nature of the soul and the outward constitution of things, points to something beyond itself. Otherwise it is a riddle without answer, a vanity without relief. It must therefore be with the fear of eternal failure, to pass from life without answering its ends. It should alarm even the atheist, to have misdirected his faculties and wasted his opportunities. It must be a fearful thing to one who thinks at all, to see that the years of this earthly existence have been spent to no worthy purpose; or, still worse, in debasing to the perishable flesh, the faculties of the immortal spirit.

7. But it may be asked;—May there not be another state of probation and moral improvement beyond the present? It is conceivable certainly; and, it is true, there is something awful in making eternity dependent upon time. But the obvious fact that the longer men live, the more fixed and determined they become in their principles and habits, whether for good or ill; leaves little ground for the expectation that another life will be given them, to effect what has been neglected in the present.

Indeed, if another state were allowed for their moral recovery and improvement, it would appear that they must be created anew, to be capable of profiting by it. In this life they become hardened and reckless, till they are incapable of love or fear; and such as they are, they pass away. "Their works do follow them:" for that they have been influenced in character, and formed in spirit by their conduct in life; that they are not what they might have been, had their pursuits been different; that the changes produced in them by a life of change, have all tended to debase them;—these are truths too evident to be questioned. We can have no ground for the supposition, that another state of probation would undo the evil of this state misspent. They come here with the simplicity, the facility, the flexible nature of a child. They

come unformed in mind and character; and life is spent in forming themselves to ill. As far as human nature can be known, nothing at last remains in them, which is capable of improvement, or susceptible to holy or lovely motives. And thus they pass the gates of death, to meet, beyond life, with the Power who sent them hither.

Consistency of Divine Purposes.

8. It may also be questioned, whether the expectation of a future life of probation for those who have failed in the present, be consistent with that Immutability of Purpose, which is shown in the laws of visible nature, and which we naturally attribute to the Infinite Being. It is often attempted to bring the charge of inconsistency against the doctrines of revelation, especially that of the fall, as if it implied that the Divine Purpose had immediately been frustrated. But to suppose that man is placed in a state of probation, where he may live till his moral nature is defunct; and then expect to have the means in another life of redeeming the opportunities, and fulfilling the purposes of the present, is much more like a charge of inconsistency in the Creator. It cannot be for nothing that He has made us, and placed us in this changeable state. For what purpose then, but that we may be proved and perfected under the government of Divine Laws? If He have

placed us here for a particular end, it may be expected that it is only here that we can fulfil that end. We cannot know the conditions of a future life, but we know that the present is a state of trial, and that it either establishes the soul in goodness, or so enslaves it to evil, that it appears to retain no faculty which can be directed to its improvement in any future state.

Universalism. Mr. Martineau.

9. There would seem to be but little safety in the expectations of Universalism. It might be expected, says Mr. Martineau, "that a revelation from the Infinite Creator would appeal sparingly to fear; for this is the coarse argument of mere power, which, if it produces submission, excites alienation, and is ill suited to the purposes of One Who would win created minds to sympathy with Himself, Who holds in His hands unlimited means of touching the springs of better affection, and capturing all souls by the power of veneration."

This opinion is open to the question,—Why should we assume that the Almighty will draw all souls to Himself in a life to come, when it is evident that all are not drawn in the present life? If we were to acquiesce in the first anticipations of reason, we might expect that all souls would always be captured to sympathy with the Great Lord of all. But in this world, it is manifest that

moral advancement is dependent on the finite will; and, whatever be the means by which God may touch the springs of better affection, it is certain that all souls are not captured and won. How then can we conclude that it will be otherwise in the life to come? We may know from reason and conscience that no creature can suffer through arbitrary decrees of Omnipotence. And revelation establishes, that all is done which is possible to Infinite Power and Goodness, to draw man to God. Yet many prefer "to eat of the fruit of their own ways." It is the Christian doctrine that they will suffer no arbitrary condemnation, but the necessary consequences of their own wilfulness; that they will be self-condemned, and will confess the Justice of their Judge.

Bearing of the doctrine on the Divine Perfections.

10. We come then to the important question,—Are eternal sin and suffering compatible with the Infinite Goodness of the Creator? or can they be assumed to be incompatible? No more can be known upon such a subject, than that the same reasons which are applicable to the strife and confusion of time, apply equally to the question of eternal strife. If finite evil may exist in the creation of Infinite Power and Goodness, we can discover no impossibility in eternal evil, nor assume that the one is more consistent with the Divine Perfections

than the other. The Deity is infinitely greater than all duration, as He is infinitely greater than time. Continuance without cessation is always but finite duration, compared with the Absolute Infinity of the Most High. If evil may exist, it may continue without end, and can furnish no more ground of objection to the Divine Character.

Hence it would appear that the atheist, who denies that evil, temporal or eternal, can consist with the Divine Perfections, is, so far, less incongruous than the deist and universalist, who admit that there is temporary sin and wretchedness, but deny that it can be unending.

Future suffering of the depraved.

11. If then sin may be without end, it is certain that suffering will go along with it. If man be immortal, he will be capable of pleasure and pain in the future state, no less than in the present. Many forces must here be nicely combined and exactly balanced, to secure the well-being of the body. It is subject to innumerable disorders, and liable to acute suffering from a thousand causes. The soul too is capable of its own joys and sorrows, —joys which, it is a common proverb, exceed any pleasures of mere sense, sorrows which are more difficult to be endured. Innumerable conditions must meet to keep us free from pain for a single

moment, and it is the exception when one of them is deranged.

It can be no light mischief then, which must ensue to those who set themselves against the Almighty. Reason can hardly expect that the world to come will be ordered for the welfare of those, who have employed the good gifts of the present life as instruments of war against the Giver. The present life is a mixed state of good and ill, and the miseries of disorder are incident to all. It is credible that perfect goodness and happiness can only be attained by any, after the separation of base and ungodly spirits to a world of their own. Can there be happiness in such a world? Can it be expected that any state of being will be adapted for the gratification of vicious propensities, and ordered for the happiness of those whose undertakings are to work confusion? It cannot even be conceived possible. The spirit of strife has wretchedness in itself, and no outward circumstances can make it happy. Nor yet, if its being continue, can it hope to dwell in eternal insensibility. In this life the godless may darken his eyes, and deaden his feelings till he sees not, and knows not his condition. Revelation is only consistent with reason, when it declares that it cannot be so for ever. It is unlikely that a man can change his nature, and alienate himself from

God, and be for ever insensible of his wretchedness. The reckless liver may often, in this life, drown all thought and care; but ruin may fall upon him as in a moment, and awaken the sudden, insufferable feeling, that all is lost. The soul released from the flesh will awaken from that moral torpor, that state "past feeling," which is so often insensible to the real wretchedness of its condition. Nor can there be any ground for the expectation that it will be purified by suffering. All experience shows that suffering does not purify the desperately wicked, but only hardens and exasperates.

Objections. Mr. Newman's opinions.

12. A common objection to the doctrine of Revelation upon this subject, that, in the words of Mr. Newman, "the current orthodoxy makes Satan eternal conqueror over Christ[1]," has no foundation in principles of reason. That man may deliver himself to Satan,—that the soul may be self-destroyed, does not make Satan conqueror of either God or man. It implies an awful responsibility of the human will, which cannot however be explained away by an assumption. Satan is not conqueror, because they who will not be won by Infinite Goodness, will be subdued by Omnipotence. He would be conqueror if evil could finally

[1] Phases, p. 48.

prevail, or could strive in heaven as in earth. But Divine Love preserves the just from eternal strife. It is their support in this time of trial, that all things are overruled for their good, and that the reign of confusion must have an end. Satan is not victorious, because sin brings its own perdition,—because the Will of God is fulfilled in heaven, and the eternal harmony is unbroken.

And that the existence of evil, though it be everlasting, is, however, no frustration of the Divine Purpose, may be inferred from discoveries of Holy Scripture, which are confirmed by the religious experience of life. Revelation declares, what experience often proves, that though all the sufferings of life are the results of moral evil, yet they are overruled by Divine Providence, to work for good to them that love God. Thus the original frame of things has been so constituted, that even the violation of its laws furthers the purposes of Creative Goodness. This truth may hold good beyond the present life. Though we cannot fathom the deep designs of Providence, yet the experience of life, as far as it goes, seems to suggest that eternal evil may possibly be productive of eternal good; and that, not through any arbitrary appointment, but consistently with the truth that man may be his own destroyer, and in the course of laws which meet the conduct of free agents what-

ever it may be, there may be a fearful meaning in the words of Scripture;—"The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil."

Another objection is of the same kind. "Would it not have been better that the whole race of man had never come into existence? Clearly!" the inquirer replies to himself, "and thus God is made out to be unwise in creating them[2]." Thus when men presume to sit in moral judgment upon God, they set themselves above the God they judge, and find Infinite Wisdom to be folly, and Eternal Purposes trifling.

Mr. Parker's opinions.

13. The late work of Mr. Parker is full of these criticisms on eternal judgments. He declines "to discuss the psychology and metaphysics of God, considering the metaphysics of man to be quite hard enough for him to grapple with and understand[3]." But then he decides them without discussing them; for he assumes a particular theory of the metaphysics of God, when he argues throughout his work, that because "the Infinite God must create all, from a perfect motive, for a perfect purpose, of perfect material, as perfect means[4]," therefore, to omit his language, the re-

[2] Phases, p. 48.

[3] Theism, &c., p. 105.

[4] Ib. p. 109.

vealed doctrine of future judgment is untrue: and "because he is sure of God and His Infinity, therefore he is sure of the ultimate welfare of every thing that God has made[5]," and sees that the scriptural doctrine of the consequences of sin represents God as "finite and imperfect[6]."

The question recurs: Why should the existence of eternal evil be inconsistent with the Divine Infinity, any more than that of temporal evil. Must not the Infinite Being, "Who creates from a perfect motive, for a perfect purpose, of perfect material, as perfect means," impart happiness to all His creatures in every moment of their being, without failure, without cessation? If not, why then ultimately?

Admitting, as he must, that pain exists in the world of a Perfect Creator, he says;—"The wisest man is only a child as yet. Philosophy has read but few pages of this great book of nature, whereof all must be known fully to understand a part. When I know that there is an Infinite God; I am sure that His purpose is good, and His means adequate; I spontaneously trust therein. This instinctive trust outruns the demonstrations of science[7]." That is, the idea of God in man is not only, as with Des Cartes, made the

[5] Ib. p. 112. [6] Ib. p. 60. [7] Ib. p. 193.

proof of His existence[8], but is applied to solve the difficulties and explain the facts of experience.

This philosophy is as opposed to the profound investigations of Kant, as to the instinctive judgments of common sense. Most men will prefer the opposite course, and will build their philosophy upon facts. They will be apt to consider, that if man be a child in his knowledge of the evil before his eyes, he may well be a child upon its future and eternal consequences.

With similar dogmatism upon the metaphysics of God, he argues, in language which we shall not quote, that there can be no such being as Satan, because such a belief makes God the Author of "absolute evil," and He must be "responsible" for such a being. To be consistent then, the Creator must be the Author of the evil in the world. And so he affirms,—"There can be nothing in nature which God did not put in nature from Himself[9]." This and similar assertions should lead to the inference that there are no such beings as evil men. But reason must here condescend to experience. Facts are not to be got rid of. But we are assured that, whatever the conduct of each may be, all will come right to each at the

[8] See also "Discourse," &c.

[9] Ib. p. 108.

last; an assurance which many will improve, in a way Mr. Parker does not intend. Why the existence of evil men should be possible, and that of Satan impossible, it is not easy to determine. Mr. Parker's readers must decide, whether it is more likely that finite evil proceeds from an Infinite Being, or that it is the work of the finite will, and tends to eternal consequences in finite beings.

To make God responsible for the evil which exists in His creatures, is another ungrounded assumption upon the metaphysics of the Divine and human wills. It is the assumption, that the author of a cause is the author of the effect of that cause[1]. This weak postulate of universal fatalism is no better than a metaphor drawn from human contrivances, and applied to the mystery of the Divine agency. A man who constructs a machine to perform a certain work, may be said to be the author of the machine's movement, and of the work. But the Works of God are not to be measured by those of man. Freewill is essentially the reverse of mechanical agency:—to argue from an analogy of this kind, is to settle the question of freedom and fatalism by an assumption. The dogma can be known to be true, only

[1] Causa causæ, causa causati.

when we are fully acquainted with the connexion between the first cause and the second, and between the second and its effect. In its general application, it is a mere postulate of pantheism.

Natural Religion has therefore no conclusive evidence that sin and suffering must cease; but would seem to suggest, that as holiness and happiness are not to be found in *all time*, so, fearful as is the thought, they may never be found in *universal being*. All we can affirm with confidence is, that the Divine Holiness and Love will ensure the ultimate happiness of all who shall be ultimately righteous. We see that all are not righteous: we know there is such a thing as enmity to God in life: we can find no evidence that it must cease. But common facts of experience give fearful indications of its permanence, and assure us that there neither is, nor can be peace or happiness to the evil spirit. From the Fountain of Eternal Good, the pure water of life cannot flow to them that do evil, and, if it did, it would be defiled by their impurity. But Eternal Love will secure the well-being of the just. Eternal Holiness will establish a perfect creation. Evil is mingled with good in life: but it is reasonable to expect, that, as Perfect Holiness is over all, so there is, beyond life, a harmonious and holy universe, unpolluted

by sin or suffering. It may be a reasonable wish, that every soul might be won to holiness and happiness: but, if not, eternal purposes cannot be frustrated, whatever may be the consequences of wilful wickedness.

The doom of evil in Sacred Scripture.

14. On this momentous subject, the Word of God confirms the worst anticipations of experience. It can convey to us only a partial and distant knowledge of the future state; but speaks in language which discloses the awfulness of eternal death. It confirms the reasonable belief, that the depraved spirit is influenced to its depths of being by its wilful misdeeds; and explains that there is a change in its relations to the Creator, a certain disruption of the unity of being between itself and the Source of life, or, as it is expressed, an alienation from the life of God, a death in trespasses and sins. With many tongues, but one voice, it affirms that this separation from the Author of its being is fraught with fearful consequences in the state beyond the grave.

It is not a single passage, nor a single writer, who forewarns us of the "Wrath to come;" but psalmists, prophets, apostles, and the Lord Himself; and that, with the solemn earnestness, the deep feeling, the importunate entreaty, which

show that they meant what they said, and were well assured of its truth. There is something very remarkable in the concurrent prophecies, so numerous both in the Old and New Testaments, pointing to "the Great Day of the Lord," which is to close the dispensations of time; and, after the contest of ages, the confusion of good with evil, the long and patient strivings of God with man, to subdue the mystery of iniquity.

It is the great truth of revelation that God is Love; but, in its earliest and its latest discoveries, He is not that unconditional Benevolence, which aims at universal happiness, without regard to the conduct and character of men. In the earliest records of inspiration, He is not only "the Lord merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" but also, "that will by no means clear the guilty." The warning becomes still more solemn, when it is declared in the New Testament by Jesus Christ.

Even the atheist can admit the tenderness, the gentleness of Jesus. He came to heal the broken-hearted, and was moved with compassion on the multitudes. In the prospect of Agony unutterable, He wept for the city which was about to crucify Him, and prayed for His murderers in the

first keen torture of His Death. And yet it was He Who said,—"Fear Him Who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." "There shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." There is the same contrast in His life, between His Love and Tenderness to the teachable, and His Awful Severity to the morally reprobate.

These contrasts have been remarked. "I found the New Testament," says one, "to contain a revelation of two Christs." It is not likely that one person would have uttered words so opposite as those of Jesus, unless both were in accordance with the truth. It is equally improbable that any writer should have forged two characters, so marked and consistent in themselves, yet wholly opposed, as it is said, to one another; or should have engrafted the one character as a forgery upon the other. Such suppositions are arbitrary and unfounded, and can only be held in ignorance of the evidences which establish the authenticity of the Scriptures. Nor, indeed, is explanation wanted upon a fact, which agrees with their constant manifestation of the Divine Character. It will be difficult to avoid the conclusion that the gentle, submitting, loving, serving, suffering Christ, is one with the awful Rebuker of vice and hypocrisy. His words of

love and compassion add emphasis to His warnings and denunciations. Both were uttered by the Same Person, because both are true.

Consistency of doctrines.

15. And it is important to notice the consistency of this truth of Scripture with the doctrines of the Gospel. Eternal Death is a mysterious and awful truth; the Death of the Son of God is no less Mysterious and Awful; but the two correspond to one another. If the Eternal Son be the Saviour, it must be for some great end that He has lived as man,—to avert some awful calamity that He has suffered. It may be a fallacy to argue, as some have done, that sin is infinite, because committed against an Infinite Being; but at least the Death of the Incarnate Son was an Infinite Sacrifice, and Scripture is therefore consistent with itself, when it regards the death in sin as an infinite evil.

It is no less self-consistent, when it declares that they who do not accept salvation cannot be purified by suffering, nor recover their lost nature in banishment from God. If it were necessary that the Son of God should take the nature, not of angels, but of men, it would seem to be in this life to which He came, that men must profit by the Deliverance He wrought. If His Blood alone can purge away sin, it can have no efficacy with outcasts. If Divine Power must recover the fallen,

there can be no recovery where there is no Spirit to strive with the sinful; and there can be no Spirit, with those who have heard the sentence,—"Depart from me."

Eternal death is indeed an awful truth; but it is no arbitrary infliction of vengeance by a finite being. Scripture confirms the inference, that it belongs to the necessities of existence. God desires not that any should perish, but that all should live. In the gift of His Son, He has done all that was possible, even to Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, for the salvation of man. Yet men perish through their wilfulness. He cannot then be chargeable with their ruin. He removes the responsibility from Himself; and, as if foreseeing the cavils of infidelity, and the fearfulness even of the sincere, declares, with the solemnity of an Oath, that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And yet the wicked dies in his sin; though God thus desires his salvation. There is indeed an awful mystery in the will, and in the existence of finite creatures. It needs the Word, the Oath, the Dying Son of God, to support the heart that feels, to satisfy the mind that reflects on such a subject.

Yet after all, is it less strange that misery should happen to the sinner, than that sin should be committed. Reason views it as opposition to God,

Revelation declares it to be odious to Him. Yet sin continues and abounds. Every one may see, in the world and in himself, that there is a war of good and evil in the creation, and that enemies of God and goodness are long without restraint in their impiety. This is not what would be expected from that notion of Infinite Perfection, which is always formed by the cultivated mind, and which is found, when critically examined, to be the revelation of God in man. This conception flows from the original constitution of human nature; and is therefore a witness of *what ought to have been*, though it cannot stand against experience as a witness to *what is*. Here is the mistake of every form of pantheism.

Sin and sorrow correlative.

16. There are thus two facts of experience, which could not have been inferred from speculations founded on natural conceptions;—the sin, and the suffering of the world. Scripture declares them to be correlative, and natural religion gives no testimony but in its favour. The manifold sorrows and ills of humanity, on which the deniers of revelation so often dwell, do indeed convey an impressive lesson to mankind. But it is not what the atheist interprets; it is not that suffering is inconsistent with the Perfections of the Deity; but that He manifests His displeasure against

impiety. They are abiding memorials of the fearful truthfulness of the first sentence upon sin; perpetual warnings that no word of God can fail, whether it promise blessing, or predict woe.

War, pestilence, earthquakes are signs of a judgment to come, and are so indicated by the Lord Himself. The ruin of cities, the devastation of countries, the fall of empires, the breaking up of happy families, the reign of riot and carnage, as if hell were let loose on earth, give no support to atheistic fancies; but are announcements to mankind of that message, which angels delivered to Lot in Sodom. "Linger not" in this world of sin. They direct us to "a better country, that is, an heavenly."

It is not by contemplating the perdition of the wicked, but by hastening from it, and by faith in God, that the faithful and loving spirit finds its joy and peace. It is in the contemplation of Perfect Holiness and Love, that it ceases to be disquieted by the mystery of iniquity. In the communion of Jesus and holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, it anticipates an eternal gladness. It has the evidences of Divine Holiness and Love within itself, and is no judge of the destiny of evil. It can trust the Holy One with His own. It has acquainted itself with God, and is at peace.

CHAPTER X.

FULFILMENT OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN THE PERFECTION OF THE LIFE IN CHRIST.

1. It did not fall within the design of this Treatise, to examine any of the external evidences of the Christian Religion. But when we examine the different books of Scripture as unknown witnesses, who profess to deliver to us the Word of God, we find, instead of the inconsistencies alleged by recent writers, a strong testimony to their veracity, in their undesigned concurrence to deliver one message to mankind. This observation will be found to apply to the many distinct parts and mysterious revelations of Scripture, which meet in one system, and combine in one harmonious whole. From the first page to the last, obedience to God is life, disobedience is death. Man is fallen, and cannot, without renewed energy from above, render the obedience which is due. The Old Testament

perpetually anticipates a Saviour and Teacher of mankind; the New Testament answers the expectations of the Old.

We have noticed several remarkable coincidences of the Revealed doctrines with one another, some of them on those mysterious subjects which have constantly been involved in uncertainty by the discussions of philosophy; coincidences which could not have been expected, except in records of Divine Truth.

To take a few instances. There is a consistency in the revelations of Spiritual death. It was the first sentence upon sin—"Thou shalt surely die." The New Testament is addressed to a world, "alienated from the life of God," "dead in trespasses and sins." The final sentence,—"Depart from me," is revealed to be everlasting death.

The Great Work of Christ for man, in the New Testament, agrees with the early promise to the fathers, with the prophecies of the Old Testament, with the sacrifices and numerous types of former dispensations, as well as with the sacrifices of the heathen world. The doctrine of the Atonement also corresponds to those of the Fall of man, of his continued probation after the Fall, of everlasting life and everlasting death. To that of the Fall: for a corrupted nature, a world of confusion, cannot be acceptable to the Most Holy. To that of

human probation; which implies that all are restored to trial, and are individually accountable, each according to his talents. To that of eternal life and death: since it could be for no trivial purpose, and to ward off no slight and passing calamity, that God became man, and suffered for the sins of the world.

Probation too is not inconsistent with eternal life or death: for it implies that man must do his work, when the opportunity is given him. If this life be intended to be preparatory to an eternal existence, there must be something awful in living only to become morally reprobate. The brief intimations of Scripture respecting the Fall of angels have the same purport: for while they appear to admit the possibility of sin to those who have not passed through a life of probation, they deny to them the possibility of recovery. "The angels who kept not their first estate, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

There is also, we have seen, an entire consistency in the Scriptural revelations of the Divine Character. From Genesis to Revelation, in the promises and warnings both of the Law and of the Gospel, in the destruction of the old world, of Sodom and Gomorrha, of the nations of Canaan, and in the severe denunciations of "Scribes and

Pharisees, hypocrites" by Jesus Christ, God is not only Beneficent, but always Just and Holy, whether to the evil or to the good; always a "Consuming Fire" to the unrighteous, and a God of Love to the penitent. We shall find a similar consistency in the revelations of Eternal Life.

Mysteries of Revelation.

2. Infidelity gains as little by its criticisms of Christian doctrine, upon questions manifestly incomprehensible. That the Bible contains mysteries beyond knowledge, agrees with the truth that it is the Word of God. Human systems of philosophy may sometimes boast to be easily intelligible. Sometimes they assume an abstract and mysterious air, and pretend to have said a great deal, when they have said nothing, and to have solved mysteries which they have not approached. Sometimes they would persuade us that there is no difficulty in heaven or earth to be solved; and, evading whatever is mysterious, suggest no question beyond the sphere of reason. Scripture is ever simple in its style; but its doctrines go beyond the reach of the understanding. A Divine Revelation must have for its design to exalt men from earth to heaven. Its foundation must rest in the Mystery of the Divine Nature, and its subject must be the relations of Creator and creature. If man be destined to a higher life, his existence and his know-

ledge, in the present world, must bear some relation to his existence and his knowledge hereafter; hence a revelation which is to guide him from time to Eternity, however practical it may be, however it may decline to satisfy curiosity on speculative questions, may be expected, however, to raise such questions; and perhaps to suggest inquiries, which go beyond human language or understanding for their full answer. It is the wisdom of man, and becomes the state of trial in which he is placed, not to be unsettled and perplexed by single difficulties which may be brought against revealed Truth. The force of plain evidences, and the practical value of known truths, ought to guard the mind against curious questions of things which belong to the Deep Ways of God.

The plan of ages.

3. This is the true answer to some difficulties which occurred in the preceding pages. One of these had reference to the acknowledged frailty of man in his first estate. That he fell so soon, and involved all his posterity in his fall, cannot be pronounced inconsistent with the Wisdom of the Creator, till we are fully acquainted with His Purpose. But the abundant manifestations of His Wisdom and Goodness, in His Dealings with man as he is, should repress anxious speculation on the condition of man, as we fancy he might have been.

Conjectures however, on the side of truth, may sometimes be opposed to conjectures against it. It is not improbable that the dealings of God with the race of mankind are, in some way, dependent upon the original weakness and frailty of human nature. To think we might have been created with a higher nature, and have been less liable to fall, is to imagine that we might have been as angels. But even to angels, and to all finite beings, there are always infinite depths beyond their reach. And, as far as human conception extends, to creatures of independent existence, there is always a possibility of sin. However exalted the nature of the creature, however noble his endowments, there is always a possibility of perdition to those who will not be content with the sphere in which God has placed them.

The sin of man, as far as man can understand, is essentially the same as what is possible to every finite creature. Brief as is the account of the Fall, there is enough to show that the transgression was a failure in that faithful dependence upon the Divine Word, which must be the condition of happiness to created beings. That the lapse is not irreparable to man, as to angels; that, through Divine Mercy in the Saviour, life is still a probation to him, may be dependent on that frailty and mutability of his nature, through which it was so

easy for him to fall [1]. But though one conjecture may answer another, we may not pretend to search the "unsearchable judgments," nor to understand the "ways past finding out."

For such an undertaking, we must be fully acquainted with the Divine intention in that great plan of ages, which includes the wrestlings of the Almighty with the mystery of iniquity. There are many indications of some great purpose to be served, not only in the life of every individual, but in the whole existence of the world,—a plan of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, which is unfolding itself from age to age. It is suggested by the very fact that mankind, of whom each is individually accountable, and each created to be eternal, yet do not exist, as distinct individuals, all in the same relationship to the First Creative Agency of the Almighty; but are so bound together in the ties of descent and consanguinity, that their sins are transmitted to generations unborn. The Fall of the race through the sin of one, the difference of revelations and religious dispensations in different ages, the selection of one family to be the special channel of supernatural power, the length of time which elapsed before the Advent of the Messiah, the partial prevalence of the Gospel

[1] Εὐκίνητος ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ αὐτεξούσιος . . . δύναται γὰρ ὥσπερ πρὸς τὰ καλὰ νεύειν οὕτω καὶ τὰ καλὰ ἀποστρέφεσθαι. Athanas. Orat. cap. iv.

spirit, after so many ages of Christianity,—these cannot be fully accounted for by the accidents of the human will, but must be included in one Divine purpose, as consistent in the course of human life, as in the slow and certain progressions of the material world. That purpose we may know to be infinitely wise and good; although we cannot expect to unfold all the mysteries, or to explain all the difficulties of a plan, in which "angels and principalities and powers" are interested, as well as we. (Eph. iii. 10, &c.)

Perfection of the future life.

4. But we see that good continually results from evil, in the common experience of life, and may expect a similar event in the existence of the whole race. One lesson, certainly, may be derived from it, which, for any thing we can know to the contrary, may bear fruit to eternal ages. The history of the world, with all its sinfulness and its wretchedness; the experience of human nature, in all its phases of degeneracy; the perpetual defacement of the good work of God by rebellious creatures; these are the testimony of ages to the truthfulness of Divine warnings, and the proof, by many forms of experience, that fearful consequences must result, when the creature, in selfishness and wilfulness, exalts himself above his sphere, or aims to be independent of his Creator.

It is a doctrine of Scripture that the saints of Christ, in the life to come, will be beyond the reach of evil, or the possibility of sin. They will possess, it appears, a perfection beyond that of angels. May not this perfection be, in the nature of things, a result of this present state of moral trial? And may not the existence of this evil world answer a purpose of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, in conducing to the possible existence of finite beings, without the possibility of evil? Here again we presume not to scan the Majestic Designs of heaven and earth; but we may see how futile are human questions upon such subjects, to form objections to revelation. The full vindication of the Ways of God belongs not to the creature. He will accomplish His Own work. He will manifest the Glory of His Perfections. "He hath appointed a day." "Every knee shall bow."

Divine Communion.

5. "The secret things belong unto the Lord, but the things revealed to man:" and it is revealed with plainness that communion with Christ on earth,—communion in heart and life, in the spirit and in the eternal law, will raise us to the reward of Christ in heaven. Whatever be the Great Purpose of God in the world, whatever the fruit of all its trials and its troubles, whatever the

unsearchable riches of Christ, whatever the fruit of His Soul's travail, whatever the fulness that dwells in Him,—all is the inheritance of His saints. The Son is the "Heir of all things:" the righteous are "joint-heirs with Christ." The language of Scripture, without exaggeration or forced interpretation, discovers the eternal relation of the Father and the Son, to be, in an incomprehensible manner, the foundation of the relationship between the world and God, and of the hope of glory to the Christian.

Godhead of Jesus Christ.

6. We have referred to the Scriptural doctrine of the Essential and Necessary Being of God. Jesus has taught us concerning His Own Being,—"As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (St. John v. 26). Thus, in the common meaning of words, the Self-Existent Being of the Godhead is "given" eternally from the Father to the Son. Other passages concur. The name of "Son," and "Word of God;" "in the beginning with God," "the Only-begotten Son in the Bosom of the Father" (St. John i. 1. 18), "the Brightness of His glory and the express Image of His Person" (Heb. i. 3).

Dependence of creation on God.

7. The connexion and dependence of creation

upon God, remains in revealed religion, the mystery it is found to be in natural religion. But, if words have meaning, creation is, in a mysterious manner, dependent upon the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son. "God created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. iii. 9). "There is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, . . . and One Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things" (1 Cor. viii. 6). "By Whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. i. 2). "He is the image of the Invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature; for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." "By Him all things consist" (Col. i. 15—17).

Thus far St. Paul. St. John also to the same effect, and on the same truth. "All things were made by Him" (St. John i. 3. 10). It is thus with reference to creation, that the Son is called "the Alpha and the Omega," the "First and the Last," "the Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. i. 11; iii. 14).

These passages and expressions are too remarkable to be unmeaning in any writer, least of all in the inspired writers. There is a depth and consistency in them, which may be regarded as Divine.

BOOK IV. CHAP. X. Divine life of the saints.

8. There is another class of passages, equally remarkable, and very numerous, which speak of the life of finite creatures in its relations to the Creator; and will be found to confirm the anticipation, upon which reason is apt to fall in its speculations on theism and pantheism,—that life, in its deep reality, the life of the immortal soul, is not the same thing in all men; but that there is some communion between God and the righteous, which is not shared by the spirits of strife,—a communion so deep and real, that the one are regarded in Scripture as alive, the other as dead; the former as one with God, the other as aliens from Him; the one, in unity with God, will hear the invitation, "Come ye blessed;" the other, having been without God in the world, will dwell eternally apart. That there is a certain communion of the righteous with the Creator of all, however unknown its nature, is both a plain truth of Scripture, and is indispensable to the harmony of other truths [2].

This doctrine does not rest on a few texts of Scripture, but is established by the peculiar and

[2] Irenæus has *ζῆσαι ἄνευ ζωῆς οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν· ἡ δὲ ὕπαρξις τῆς ζωῆς ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ περιγίνεται μετοχῆς· μετοχὴ δὲ Θεοῦ ἐστι γινώσκειν αὐτόν.* Adv. Hær. iv. c. xxxvii. And (ii. c. lxii.) he regards the righteous as possessing body, soul, and Spirit, meaning the Spirit of God; while the wicked are said to rise from the dead, possessing body and soul, without Spirit.

constant language of the New Testament. It is described as "Fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3); and as "the Communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. xiii. 14). It is the promise of Jesus to His disciples that the Comforter shall be given to dwell in them (St. John xiv. 17); it is His entreaty that they will abide in Him, and have life, as the branches draw their life from the vine (xv. 4); it is His Prayer, "as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (xvii. 21). Hence the usual expression of Scripture that Christians are IN Christ. They are raised from the death of sin in Him. "As in Adam," the father of all, "all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22). "In Christ Jesus they who were before far off are made nigh" (Eph. ii. 13). They can "do all things, in (ἐν) Christ Who strengthens" them (Phil. iv. 13). They have peace in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. v. 14). They are "called unto eternal glory in Christ Jesus" (ver. 10). After death they are "the dead in Christ" (1 Thess. iv. 16); and they look to be presented "perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 28).

And as they dwell in Christ, so He dwells in them. God "dwells in them, and walks in them" (2 Cor. vi. 16): "Jesus Christ is in

BOOK IV. CHAP. X.

them, except they be reprobates" (2 Cor. xiii. 5). Christ in them is "the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27).

These are a few of many passages, which cannot easily, when viewed all together, mean any thing less, than to confirm the probable truth of reason, that the relations between the Creator and the creature are changed by the creature's sinfulness; and that, in a peculiar manner, not applicable to all, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God" (Wisdom iii. 1).

This then is all that it concerns us to know. The finite may not search the Mysteries of the Infinite, but to know the way of salvation, is to be guided "into all truth." Evil abounds in finite beings; but God is Infinite Power, Infinite Wisdom, Infinite Holiness, Infinite Love: and Jesus has been revealed "to bring us to God." Live then by the perfect law,—the law of Love to God and man. It is the law of Sinai, and the law of "the mountain," where Jesus taught. There is no higher law, there can be no higher. It is the law of universal harmony and eternal order,—the law which comes forth with creation from the Source of all reality, and all perfection. Live by that law, and "abide" in Jesus.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His Will . . . . which He hath purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him; . . . Whom He hath raised from the dead, and set at His Own Right Hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i.).

CONCLUSION.

The subjects which have engaged our attention are not mere barren speculations, but have, already, in several instances, led us close upon practical questions of the greatest importance, some of them especially deserving of notice at the present time.

No reflecting person, who considers the state of society and of religion, can fail to see that extensive changes are impending. Indeed the country has been already, for several years, in a quiet state of transition. There can be little doubt that the spirit of melioration must extend, more than it has yet done, to religious customs and institutions. Every one who has at heart the welfare of the community, or is interested in the stability of society, will wish that changes may always be effected peaceably and lawfully, and may not go

Conclusion. beyond the correction of abuses. Change is not necessarily improvement. The opposite extreme is ever but a change of evils.

It might be easy to deduce from the foregoing chapters many "inferences necessary for and useful to mankind." We shall confine attention to one or two, which appear to be of primary importance.

I. First of the doctrines of Christianity. It has been our aim to show that there are truths of religion,—objective truths, which can be established with as much certainty, as any knowledge attainable by man. Though human words and notions cannot explain the mysteries of the Divine Nature, yet they are not incompetent to deliver to us some real truth of Him, Who is the Creator and the Judge of men.

The doctrines of the Divine Being and Character, of creation, of human sinfulness, and of Redemption by Jesus Christ, are not mere speculative dogmas,—but are the foundation of all human duty, and of human destiny. The Infinite in Power, Wisdom, and Goodness cannot be the Author of confusion. All His works are perfect. The universe is in perfect order, as from Him. The sin of the finite will is the source of strife and disorder. It breaks the harmony of creation. It brings con-

fusion and misery upon earth, and is the beginning of the eternal strife of hell. Conclusion.

The recovery of man from that moral ruin,—that spiritual death, which ensues upon resistance of the Divine Will,—is the purpose of all the strivings of God with man in Revelation. It is accomplished by the same Eternal Word,—the Son of the Father, by Whom all things were made. He is the Giver of natural life to man, and the Restorer of Divine life to the soul. In the Redemption by Jesus Christ, the fallen are delivered from the slavery of sin and Satan, and are restored to a state of moral probation. Through the Work of the Saviour of all men, the alienated are brought back to God; spiritual life is renewed; the harmony of creation is restored. In the gifts of Grace, purchased by the Precious Blood of Atonement, men receive "power to become the sons of God" (St. John i. 12), and to "walk as children of light" (Eph. v. 8).

If there be truth in these doctrines, it must be of consequence to believe them, and to be influenced by them. If they be the subjects of special revelation from God to man, it cannot be a matter of indifference, whether they be accepted or rejected. It is not likely that the Great Creator will interfere with the course of nature, and set

Conclusion. aside in miracles the common process of its laws, unless to authenticate truths which are of consequence to be known and believed. And all who have had the least experience of practical Christianity, are familiar with the power of its motives, to promote goodness of heart and holiness of life.

Nor is there any thing unreasonable in the opinion that man is accountable for his belief. This is constantly a matter of objection in the present day. How can a man, it is demanded, be responsible for that in which he has no choice? Belief depends upon evidences, which an honest mind will endeavour to estimate at their true value. To be influenced by hope or fear, in the reception of what the mind perceives to be true, would be of itself immoral, and therefore pernicious to the soul.

But belief depends upon two things; the evidences, and the mind which examines them. The elements of knowledge are deep seated in the mind; the principles of judgment spring from their hidden source within the soul. In that same depth of life, the conduct has that influence upon the character, which discovers, in the constitution of human nature, the manifest judgment of God upon all iniquity. So far then as false opinion arises from the influences of the conduct upon the

mind, it is unquestionable that man must be responsible for it. Conclusion.

But it is chiefly in this indirect way, that he can be held accountable for his belief[1]. It is true that he cannot justly be punished for what is not dependent upon the will, and it is true that the reception of truth or error is seldom immediately dependent upon it.

It is in conduct, then, that man must find the duties which belong to him in life; and in conduct, that he must fulfil the destiny which God has appointed him. In the order of God's gifts to man, the secret influence of His Presence stands prior to the power of performance; grace is before goodness; in the order of human agency, it is in the power of the will upon the outward actions, and in the *conscious feelings*, that man has power to control and to direct. It is from these that he sends down the unerring messengers of conscience,

[1] On the opinion of the ancient philosophers, that "error of judgment, being involuntary, is not the proper subject of moral disapprobation," Sir James Mackintosh (Eth. Diss. in Encycl. Brit.) quotes Plato, Πᾶσαν ἀκούσιον ἀμαθίαν εἶναι (Soph. Ed. Bip. ii. 227); who is quoted by Marcus Aurelius, Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἄκουσα, φησὶν Πλάτων, στέρεται ἀληθείας. (Epict. lib. i. cap. 28.) Also Augustine, "Quis est qui velit decipi? Fallere nolunt boni; falli autem nec boni volunt, nec mali." (Sermo de Verbo.) But according to Aquinas, faith is a virtue, "not in the sense in which it denotes the things believed, but in that in which it denotes the state of the mind which leads to right belief:" "Accipitur fides pro eo quo creditur, et est virtus; et pro eo quod creditur, et non est virtus." (Aq. Op., Paris, 1664. ix. 236.)

Conclusion. to inscribe their faithful records upon the inmost nature, and to leave behind them there their influence for good or ill. His power does not reach to the depths of his being. He cannot see, by any direct observation, whether his inmost soul possess the gifts of spiritual life. His sphere of duty lies in the outward actions, and in those conscious feelings, which he has power to modify and to control.

When this truth is duly considered; still more, when the revelation of God in the constitution of the soul shall have gained that attention which its importance demands, it will be thought surprising that speculation has, in all ages, received so much more attention, and occupied the energies of men so much more intensely than moral improvement. It can only be through disregard of the Word of God, both in creation and in revelation, that doctrine is continually regarded as of greater consequence than practice. Speculation has, in fact, been the bane of Christianity, and has crippled the energies of the Church, and restrained its proper influence from the earliest age. Not but that, both in the present, and in every age, many individual Christians have devoted their lives to the advancement of genuine goodness, and to the best interests of their fellow men. But it can

hardly be questioned that the history of Christianity upon the whole, is too much a history of dogmas and dissensions; too little a record of moral triumphs, and of social progress. The truths of revelation are the means; justice, goodness, temperance, the end. The moral and religious advancement of the race, as of every individual, is the aim and purpose of revelation. The Christian doctrines need not be questioned, nor their influence undervalued, before it can be seen that their discussion has occupied a disproportionate share of zeal and energy: while the most momentous, and sometimes the simplest questions of moral practice,—questions, which Providence has left to human thought and effort, are not only undecided, but are often involved in a popular confusion of thought, mischievous in its immediate effects, and, through the misconceptions of sceptics, made to furnish objections to Christianity. Conclusion.

II. One obvious result of doctrinal speculations is the incessant division and subdivision of churches and sects. Many have been engaged, of late years, in seeking anxiously for "the Church." It is rightly assumed that Christ left One Church in the world. All the creatures of God are originally one; one in Divine Order, one in Divine Communion. And, no doubt, the visible Church

Conclusion. on earth would still be one, if the Work of God were not perpetually defaced by the sin of man. But as human sinfulness broke the harmony of the first creation, so it long since broke the harmony of the Church.

The Church was, at first, a united body of true and simple Christians; sincere, earnest, pious, and single-minded. In the true and spiritual worship of God, in continual adoration of the Great Head, Jesus Christ, they lived spotless and guileless, and often heroic lives. Their fame has reached us by well-known testimonies, heathen as well as Christian. With them, there was at first no Idolatry, nor Pharisaism. They were charged with atheism, because they were not idolaters: but they knew well how to answer the charge; and, like those before them, who saw the promises afar off, they were brave and fearless in the worship of the One True God, amid the impieties of demoralized, and malignant, and often infuriated heathendom. They had no need, like modern Romanists, to find cloaks for idolatry, nor, like some of our modern Protestants, to draw broad distinctions between morality and godliness. They did not worship a God afar off, but Him, Whose Spirit dwelt in their hearts: they needed no false Mediators, for they lived as in the Presence of Jesus. They had not one law for Sundays, another for the week; one for reli-

gion, another for trade; one for the house of God, another for their own homes. They wanted no idols, for, in their spirits, they beheld Him Who is invisible; no subterfuges, for they lived by that Law of Order, which had been fulfilled in the perfect example of God Manifest in the flesh. *Love to God and man*, was not a mere phrase upon their lips; it gave living motives to their hearts, and principles to their daily life. CONCLUSION.

Such pure and truthful, such upright and loving spirits, are the genuine fruits of Christianity. They exhibit the work of God in renewed man. But where are they now to be found? Where, the sceptic may demand, are these bright examples of the Christian character? They exist, it may be answered, in all the walks of life; though perhaps seldom among those, who make the loudest, or the most exclusive professions of religion. The Church still lives, according to the assurance of its Founder, though He alone can trace its boundaries, and enumerate its members. In the world, it is as true as ever, that there is but little, comparatively, which can be called Divine. Even the atheist exclaims against the spiritual littleness of the age. In the world, with all its religious pretensions, and its boast of light, you see that selfishness of man in all its forms, which ever mars the perfect work of the Almighty.

Conclusion. Of the many who take the name of Christian, how few comparatively attain to the spirit of Christianity. Even the sincere, how seldom do they show that earnestness of Christian endeavour, which might be expected of those who believe it to be the great work of man in life, to learn to love God more than himself; and to love man, till the injury of himself, his own loss, his own suffering, would not be more anxiously avoided, than the deed which would bring it to another. The sincere are often satisfied with a stunted growth in goodness: the half-religious want to bargain with God, and to save their souls as cheaply as they can: the multitude are deceived with excitements, or think nothing of the matter. The work of God survives indeed, but how is it marred by the sin and wilfulness of man.

False worship has been one great corruption of Christianity, or rather, one cloak of human selfishness and perversity. Idolatry and superstition, which had been conquered when without, became conquerors when they were admitted within. The Revelation of St. John shows the decline of Christian doctrine in its commencement. This apostle aimed at the root of the disease, in the expressive admonition which he so often uttered,—"Love one another." But the love of self was too strong. As the spirit of Christianity languished,

its form became more acceptable to the world. The churches decayed during several generations, till it was but a miserable image of the religion of Jesus, which fell under the sword of Mahomet. Conclusion.

Idolatry and hero-worship,—for saint-worship is nothing else,—are still crying sins of Christendom; and are palliated or defended by the very arguments which were employed by intelligent heathen, and, it would seem, also by the Israelites, when they adored the calf as an image of Him Who brought them out of Egypt. Excuses and palliations are always possible, even on the most monstrous practices: as objections may always be made to the plainest truths. And is it not evident, that to adore the saints, and offer through them the prayers of Christians to the Highest, is to overlook the Omnipresence of the Creator, and to assign His Attribute to the creature?

And in the Church of Christ, as in the Church before Christ, as soon as Idolatry had been rooted out, Pharisaism sprung up to take its place. When human perversity, and individual selfishness can no longer lower the eternal standard of right by false conceptions of God, it begins to delude itself with false pretences, petty scruples, empty forms; and passes over the weightier matters of the law,

Conclusion. as too high for human attainment, or no longer obligatory on weak humanity, because they have been fulfilled by Christ. How often scruples usurp the place of virtue, forms of godliness, we need not delay to inquire.

Viewing then the history of man, upon the whole, the fact cannot well be questioned, however it may be accounted for, that human nature, as Mr. Parker expresses it, "has never yet worked well." It fell in its first parent; it became so utterly depraved that the whole race was destroyed, except eight persons; the new world, beginning even with the family preserved from the old, followed in the footsteps of the former; the nation set apart from others, and appointed to hand down the knowledge of Jehovah, and to be the keeper of His Oracles, were long sold to idolatry; and, when this form of sinfulness was conquered by bitter afflictions, passed to that Pharisaical degeneracy, which was so severely denounced by Jesus Christ. The Christian dispensation has added another chapter to the history of human sinfulness and Divine Goodness. Even in "the kingdom of heaven" upon earth, even in the Church founded by the Saviour, an enemy sows tares among the wheat.

Thus in all that is known of the history of

humanity, there is little to favour the theory of natural progress. CONCLUSION.

This Scriptural view of human history is not likely to meet with the approbation of Mr. Parker; and he delivers his opinion of it, in his usual manner [2]. Nevertheless, he gives us an example of this course of corruption, in a case of Romish doctrine. After some observations on the Birth of the Saviour, he goes on to tell us, that in the course of twelve or thirteen hundred years, the supernatural birth of Mary became a fixed doctrine; and now, he says, some of them are insisting on the immaculate conception of Anna, the supposed mother of Mary; and so, he adds, they may go on, forming doctrines by caprice, till it may become a doctrine of some future church, that there have been seven immaculate conceptions [3].

This course of caprice is hardly consistent, one would think, with his theory of progress. We have got to the second generation in eighteen hundred years, and shall need many more centuries, to reach the seventh. To say the least, it is a long reign of caprice; and we need the Chinese chronology, which he allows us, that the world may right itself from these developments of perversity.

Mr. Newman has published a book, in which it

[2] "Theism, &c.," p. 65.

[3] Ib. p. 57.

Conclusion. is attempted to bring this process of "doctrinization" by caprice, into strict accordance with the theory of development; but, strange to say, it is not the Author of the "Phases of faith," but the celebrated Father Newman, who takes this view of the progress of doctrines[4]. His theory is consistent enough with the assumption of Romanism, that the Church, in all ages, has been committed to the care of an infallible living head. This figment has been supported, of late, in another Romish writer of some note, by the argument, that it is an imputation on the Wisdom of God, to suppose Him to have conferred His most precious gift on man, and then immediately to have permitted him to break it into a thousand pieces.

Might not the Deist here correct his theory of Nature, by observing the long ages of corruption which he assigns to the Church; and the Romanist, his theory of the Church, by observing the corruption of human nature, the greatest work of God in creation, and considering its frequent relapses, and long ages of degeneracy? The facts of history, from the earliest times, are far from encouraging an expectation that the perfection of society will be realised through any unaided human efforts, or natural powers of mankind. The corruption of

[4] "Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine."

the first creation, through the wilfulness of the creature, equally precludes the assumption, that the new creation in Jesus Christ will be protected against the inroads of moral perversity, by any infallible guide, or supernatural authority. CONCLUSION.

We have here, in fact, an instance of the Wisdom of God, in that unchangeableness of His Will, by which the purpose of human life remains the same under every dispensation, from the creation of the first parent of man, to the present day. The nature of man, and the condition of the world, are, without doubt, very different from what they would have been, if sin had not wrought confusion in the Perfect Work of God. Yet, notwithstanding the perversity of the finite will, the Divine Purpose is the same as from the first.

The Unchangeableness of the Creator is not that of a mechanical agency, which is bound in the necessity of laws and causes. It is not the fatalist's law of nature, but a plan of action prepared to meet all possible events and changes of inferior natures. It is a plan which remains unchanged by the variable agency of finite creatures; and is prepared for every possible contingency, in all the actions and all the thoughts of a thousand generations.

It is in accordance with the Laws of the Divine

Conclusion. Conduct, that the condition of fallen man is not that of man in his integrity; yet is changed in such a way, that the purpose of life, discovered to us by natural and revealed religion, remains the same as from the first. Adam, before he fell, was placed in a state of trial: life was the reward of faithfulness, death of disobedience. All the children of Adam, notwithstanding the degeneracy of human nature, are born into a state of trial, to be dealt with, according to their faithfulness, or their disobedience.

The sin of man, with all its consequences, has made no essential change in the purpose of human life. Probation implies difficulties and temptations; and it is quite consistent with it, that they may be more or less numerous or severe. The one external prohibition was the trial of faith to the first of the human family. The varied troubles and temptations, from within and from without, serve a similar purpose to his descendants. Sin has increased the difficulties of life, and robbed man of his ability to meet them. But by Redemption moral strength has been restored to all: and, if the trials of life be often severe, nothing is more certain, from conscience and from revelation, than that every individual of the race will be responsible for his own actions and powers. The Judge of men can read the hearts, and knows

the motives of every deed, and takes account of all the circumstances of every individual of the race. Conclusion.

It is the truth of Scripture, and contains nothing unreasonable, that, without Redemption, mankind were spiritually dead; and that the great Work of Salvation has delivered them from that bondage of sin, in which their natural powers would have been unavailing. They are restored to their first estate, not indeed of sinlessness, but of trial.

The intelligent Christian, of whatever church or sect, should learn from the aberrations of human reason, and the constancy of the Divine Purpose, to estimate religious opinions, more than has been customary, according to their moral tendencies; and religious customs and observances, not as if all customs were the mere marks of party differences, but by their adaptation to human nature. The consideration of the moral purpose of life should check that miserable jealousy of speculative or doctrinal differences, which is so common;—differences, which are often of words, more than things, and will generally be found, when calmly analysed, either to resolve themselves into ambiguities of language, or to rest in dogmatism on things unknown.

Conclusion. Genuine moral worth is ever that which is to be most highly valued and had in honour. Wherever it exists, it is conformity to the Divine Order. Different religious systems may be more or less in accordance with Scripture, more or less adapted to the wants of human nature, more or less effectual for its improvement. But the holiness of a healthful spirit is always the great end and aim of religion. In all the changes of man, and the confusion of the world, it is the Goodness of God which abideth for ever, and all human goodness is its reflection. Modern civilization has been developed and fostered by Christianity, even in those imperfect forms of it, which have, for the most part, been dominant in the world. No church, perhaps, has been free from great imperfections, whether in doctrine, in discipline, or in practice. If men were fair and tolerant, they would judge things more than they do, on their own merits, and by the Rule of Right; and not on the rule of bigotry, which makes every thing good to be on our own side, and every thing to be evil, which is of another party.

Even to the Roman Church, though its errors may be palpable, and what concerns us more, its pretension to dominion in every country arrogant and unfounded; yet we need neither ascribe an influence of unmixed evil in the world, nor ignore

the debt which Christendom owes it, for its services in ages past. Undiscriminating censure is seldom the mark of truth. Whenever the imagination loses its sway over the reason, there will be an end of decisions such as we have heard of late, and the dominion of Rome will cease[5]. Meanwhile, we are not so free from inconsistencies and imperfections at home, that much time or energy should be wasted in exposing the errors of foreign churches. This may sometimes be a necessary duty, but it easily becomes a moral evil. It is consistent with human infirmity, to make the censure of others the cloak of indifference to our own responsibilities. Perhaps such a temper is not without example in the religious world. Are there not many congregations in Britain, who will listen with delight to denunciations of Romish doctrine and practice; but will tell you their minister has not preached the Gospel, if he have dwelt, at equal length, upon those duties of man, which fall under the Eternal Law, and which it is the very purpose of the Gospel to inculcate and enforce? Churches, as

Conclusion.

[5] Mr. Martineau holds that in the earlier period of human progress, while imagination held the ascendancy, and the understanding was little consulted, the religion of Rome was well adapted to human wants. Though no friendly critic, he does ample justice to the Church, which "stood by the desert fountain, from which all modern history flows, and dropped into it the sweetening branch of Christian truth and peace."

Conclusion.

well as individuals, may generally find enough to occupy their attention and their energies within their own spheres; and it is generally an evil to go beyond our sphere, to discuss errors and imperfections in which we are not concerned. If Rome have not delivered on, in its first clearness and purity, to the end of time, the truth which she received from the fountain; if the Reformed Churches regained the fountain, in the abiding Word, yet they have still much to accomplish, before their practice will be equal to their profession. The superstitions of the Romish Church are not more obvious, than the frivolous dissensions and endless strife of the Reformed. It should be the first care of every church, that its government be pure, and its discipline, its worship, its teaching, adapted to the wants, the affections, the capabilities of human nature.

If the One Church of Christ have been broken up by the sinfulness of man, there is still life in the separate parts. It is best cherished by mutual toleration, and the disposition to correct our own defects, rather than to dwell upon those of others. The diffusion of true Christian morality will bring together those who are apart. The Love of God and man can be the only basis of reunion.

III. It is a frequent reproach which scepticism

throws upon the Christian world, and not altogether without foundation, that, notwithstanding its boasts of heavenly light, and its affected compassion for the darkness of other nations, there is, after all, comparatively little of the genuine spirit of the Gospel to be found among us. That there is some reason for this imputation, will be allowed by all who observe the vice and depravity, which reign in towns and villages. Consider, for instance, the common spirit and practice of our trade. Its dishonesty has become a proverb. Many a heathen would repudiate, with indignation, habits not uncommon among Christian Englishmen. Every one knows, for instance, how prevalent are the practices of adulteration. Many, who assume an air of devotion on the Sundays, think it no crime to God or man to spend the six days of the week in selling false goods. They will poison their neighbours, in their haste to be rich. They will sell adulterate food to the healthy, and adulterate drugs to the sick; and even to brave soldiers abroad, who have shed their blood for their country; and, while they are selling their souls for their daily bread, will often be offended, if they are denied the name of Christian. Conclusion.

This corruption of trade is generally imputed to the incorrigible depravity of human nature.

Conclusion. But it may too easily be assumed to be incorrigible, by those who do not look for its causes in the deficiency of Moral Education.

Mistaken opinions of the same character have long been prevalent on the subject of epidemic diseases, not of the mind, but of the body. Men have been accustomed to regard them as immediate Divine visitations, and to expect their removal by means of prayer, while they neglected to employ the remedy, which God had already placed in their hands. But people are at length beginning to see, that to pray to God for deliverance from evils which are the natural results of their own sloth, is little short of blasphemy; and are now paying attention to precautionary measures. They will, in the course of time, learn a similar lesson, respecting the moral condition of men. It has long been a popular proverb,—"Use the means, and God will give the blessing;" but few seem yet to know how much is implied in this wise saying; few have yet learnt, that in religious and moral strength and power, as in every other Divine gift, man has received of God, far more than he has well employed.

These vices, unhappily, are not confined to that section of the community, which professes to renounce the Christian religion. They are common with many, who profess to believe the Christian

truths, and hope to save their souls by a late repentance; ignorant that the chains of vicious habits, in which they deliberately bind themselves, cannot so easily be broken. Nor are they unknown among those who are enrolled as members of Christian communities; who assume the tone of religion in their conversation, and think themselves entitled to its hopes and privileges, though their whole life is a defiance of its duties. CONCLUSION.

Defective views of the nature and purpose of religion, are confined to no particular religious body, or class of society. It is not without example, that they who think themselves the elect, and regard others, often of better religious and moral character than themselves, as reprobate from goodness,—or rather, as reprobate from salvation, for goodness and salvation are not always thought to go together,—some, who imagine themselves to have found the truth, and to possess it as their peculiar treasure, may be seen, even in ordinary transactions, to be governed by no moral principle, or honourable feeling; to have no higher aim in life than their own enjoyment or aggrandizement; to follow out their abject ends by perpetual intrigue; to be addicted to slanderous conversation, and fomentors of that worst of all confusion,—religious bickering and dissension. It is not even without example, that men of natural honesty and good

Conclusion. nature have become less trustworthy, or less humane, when they have been enrolled among the members of a religious body.

Are these then the fruits of Christianity? Is Christianity to be held chargeable for the vices of those who assume its name? Any candid reader of the New Testament, can have no difficulty in answering the questions. Christianity cannot be held responsible for vices, which it is its whole aim and purpose to repress. It is to be judged neither by the false professions of individuals, nor by mistaken views of it, which may be demoralizing. The aim of Christianity is true Morality: its law is that of love to God and man.

We have already endeavoured to distinguish between the religion of Jesus Christ, and its false professors. It is of still greater consequence, to distinguish it from mistaken views of it. It can only serve the cause of scepticism to confound them. That even the sincere Christian will often be mistaken, and mistaken views have pernicious effects, is no more than may be expected from human fallibility. It needs but little knowledge of human nature, to see that perversions of religious truth will easily have demoralizing effects.

The end of all religion is the improvement of

human nature in its highest faculties. Is it not the fact, however, that, in various quarters of the religious world, doctrines are set forth, and principles inculcated, which must have an opposite tendency? By a large number of Christians, even the fundamental truth of man's moral nature is altogether denied. They think they can exalt the Grace and Sovereignty of God, by taking away the Free agency of man. They imagine they honour the Creator, by regarding His works, in the living as in the material world, as no better than ingenious machines, which, in spite of appearances, might be thought to work as He intended, if it were not that they are perpetually deluded with a feeling of free agency, when, in fact, they are always moved by prior influences. CONCLUSION.

Others again, who hold the freedom and moral responsibility of man, as a doctrine or speculative opinion, yet destroy its force as a practical truth. This is the case, for instance, when the doctrine of human depravity is stated in such unqualified terms, that one might think man were in that desperate condition which would have befallen him, if no Saviour had been revealed. The only effect of such a doctrine is to throw the responsibility of the individual will upon the corrupt nature of mankind. It lulls the conscience of the vicious, to be able to shift the blame of his faults

Conclusion. from himself to his unfortunate nature, or perhaps to Adam. The consequence is, that religious endeavour is discouraged, moral effort repressed. As if every man had not far more to regret in his own sin, than in that of his nature.

The mischief of this false religion is no where so evident as in the education of children. It is frequently remarked, in the present day, how often the children of religious people turn out ill. And what can be expected when moral training is withheld, and moral power denied, under the pernicious notion, that they can be of no use, till God's time shall come, to shed some extraordinary effusion of Divine light within the heart, which shall overpower the vicious affections, and constrain the finite will by Sovereign Grace. When the young are thus indoctrinated with the utter depravity of human nature, and the co-ordinate truth of their redemption from spiritual ruin is forgotten, how can they be expected to aim at spiritual progress, or to strive for their moral perfection? This is a demoralization of the rising generation, through the perversion of religious truth. And when so great an evil is forced on the attention of the community, it is under the form, not of a simple question of practical religion, but of a speculative question, which might seem to be studiously stated in the form least capable of solution. Speculation, on

such a question, easily runs beyond the limits of knowledge; the practical truth is obvious, both from natural and from revealed religion;—No man can suffer but through his own iniquities; grace and power are given to all, for which all will be responsible in their measure. Conclusion.

Another form of this perverted Christianity, is the frequent separation, sometimes, indeed, the opposition which is drawn between religion and morality. There are many pulpits in the country, and not confined to one denomination of Christians, in which you will hear little of the Eternal Law. There are many hearers who will take offence, many who will think their minister ignorant of the Gospel, if he dwell much or often on practical duties. The truth of Scripture is sufficiently plain. Practical Goodness in heart and life was the very purpose of the Great Work of Christ, and is the only safe proof that the heart is interested in His work. Yet this simple truth is almost obsolete among the humbler classes, at least in some parts of the country, and entirely through the false religious teaching of a century past. The proof of true religion among the uneducated is no longer made to depend upon the law of love to God and man, but on inward excitements of the mind. The decisive question with these religionists, is not whether experience proves

Conclusion. them to be sincere, but whether they feel inwardly "happy," often no more than whether they have felt happy at some bygone period. On such a system, the aim of preaching is not to guide the understanding, nor to win the heart to good principles, and generous dispositions, and honesty of purpose, but to excite a warmth of feeling of whatever kind; often to encourage a false fanatic faith in barren words or conventional expressions, which are the watchwords of a party. Virtue and goodness thus come to be regarded as something quite distinct from Christian holiness. You may hear from many a pulpit, that "morality is all very well in its way, but will not get a man to heaven." And thus it is attempted to exalt revelation, by depreciating that moral improvement, which it is the very purpose of all revelation to enforce,—to honour God, by disparaging His Holiness.

No wonder that religious Pharisaism is the fruit of such a system. How much it abounds, may be inferred from the comparison of profession with practice; from the high excitements and disputes about forms and observances, of no moral or religious efficacy; from the often vehement opposition to innocent recreations, equally indifferent in themselves.

By such means it has come to pass that religion

sometimes appears to intelligent men, to be at variance with common sense. To give ground for such an impression, cannot be otherwise than mischievous: it becomes especially so, when sceptics are professing to inculcate the morality, which, they say, is neglected by the churches. If errors of this kind be even partial, they are sure to be represented as universal. Conclusion.

It will not be thought that these observations are suggested by any disposition to disparage the present age, in comparison with those which have gone before it, least of all with those immediately preceding. On the contrary, it is one of the most hopeful signs of the present day, that practical religion, and moral improvement, and general education, gain so much more attention than in times past. We may gratefully acknowledge that there has been, of late years, a revival of genuine Christianity, and at the same time question, whether it might not be largely extended by a more general attention to the moral constitution of man, and his relation to that eternal law of order, which rests in God.

That the foregoing remarks may not depend on the opinion or observation of one person, some extracts shall be taken from the evidence of a witness examined before a government commis-

Conclusion. sion, who is evidently well acquainted with the condition of large towns, and who can speak with much force and intelligence [6].

"All business now is war. We have left off, in Europe at least, the musket and the bayonet, and have taken to a sort of Thuggee in the streets. Look where you will, they are all at it, stifling one another.

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"It is to my mind one of the most disgusting signs of the times, that placards announcing sales at 'hideous sacrifices' are sure to attract customers. Few reflect, as they ought, that nine times out of ten, the advertiser is either a liar or a swindler; that he means either to cheat the public or to swindle his creditors."

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"The competitive system is now an endeavour to pull down, and to grow great upon the ruins of others; but a better spirit may make it only an active endeavour, to give to others as much as we can, and take as little as we can in return. . . . Such a system would dispense nothing but blessings, and increase them only from the love of doing good. It would be happiness at work.

[6] Evidence of Mr. J. W. Hancock, in "Appendix to the Report of the Commissioner, appointed to inquire into the condition of the Frame-work knitters." Part ii. 1845.

This is a dream at present; but recent events have diminished contempt against dreamers. Certain I am, that the competitive system, as it now exists, is a hideous prodigy in a Christian country, and that the Author of Christianity condemns it by the plainest implication. I believe also that the Church is the main cause of it."

"In what possible way?" the Commissioner could not but inquire, and the answer is,—

"By preaching next to nothing but articles of faith. What do I hear every Sunday in our parish Church? Exhortations to 'owe no man any thing, but to love one another?' No such thing. Is virtue ever talked about? Very seldom. Scarcely ever without some sort of disparagement. A whole stream of reverend gentlemen, one after another, are in an agony of fear, lest the practice of virtue should beguile us into pride and self-confidence. There might be no need to teach goodness. It might be dangerous to walk along the streets, lest moral sensibility should be too much wrought upon by excess of brotherly kindness. A rogue might be a rarity. The whole world might be in danger of forgetting God, through thinking too much of His Command,—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' It might be needful to build an ark, to save us from a deluge of charity, and disin-

Conclusion. terestedness, and generosity, and temperance, and chastity, and justice, and contentment, and integrity, and honour, and all manner of good works. The ten commandments might have been contrived for the especial purpose of upsetting Christianity."

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"I am aware that it is contended that, in the warfare of self-interest, each man takes better care of himself than would be the case on any other plan, and I am as well aware that there is no such doctrine in the Bible. I cannot imagine that a worse principle rules in hell. Let any man name me a worse principle. Put it in the fewest words and look at it. See how it looks. Here they are—'*Every man for himself.*' Talk of Dante's inscription over the gates of his *Inferno!* This is the plain English of it—*Every man for himself.* It is written in English, the English of the new philosophy, over the gates of the world, and children are taught it, as soon as they can understand evil. If a man says, 'I have a right to do the best I can for myself,' I might warrantably reply—'Yes, you have a *natural* right to do so, and you will do so, if you are a savage. You have also a *civil* right to do so, as long as no law is passed to hinder you: but as a Christian, you have no such right. As a Christian, you have a right to do as well for your neigh-

bours as for yourself; and if you claim any right inconsistent with that, you practically renounce Christianity." CONCLUSION.

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"Nine-tenths of the population are practically heathens; and what they are practically, that they are really. It is worse than nonsense, it is a mischievous delusion, to call this a Christian country; it is a country of infidels, and a country of creeds. Convert it to Christianity—sound, old-fashioned, practical Christianity,—and it will be a very different country."

That there is too much truth in these observations cannot easily be denied. The root of the evil appears to lie in a wide-spread ignorance of the true relations between religion and morals. Their separation is the destruction of both. Men of the world may be too busy to join together, what preachers are studious to put asunder; and neither can subsist by itself. Morality without the sanctions of religion, has little power against present interests and inclinations: religion is but a superstition and a formality, which common sense will not condescend to notice, when it fails to make men more honest, more truthful, more temperate, and more generous.

It should be the part of Christians to set in

Conclusion. action all the forces, and to call into play all the motives, which may engage men to the practice of truth and virtue. Otherwise the deist, and even the atheist, may step before them in truthfulness to God. The Antichristian writers, whose works have been quoted in these pages, all profess to be teachers of morality, some of them even sufferers in its cause. Mr. Parker preaches love to God and man, and is prominent in resistance of the iniquitous fugitive slave law. Mr. Newman's great fear is lest the conscience should be "depressed to the Biblical standard;" a very groundless apprehension certainly, but not the less indicating his purport. And Mr. Holyoake often speaks, as if, notwithstanding his atheism, he meant well to his fellow-men. It may be useful, as well as curious, to hear what an atheist has to say, as a preacher of morals. After quoting a passage from the Rev. Sydney Smith, on "the unequal distribution of good and evil in the present state," which speaks of "the honest and orthodox method, of preparing young people for the world as it actually is, by telling them that they will often find vice perfectly successful, virtue exposed to a long train of affliction, that they must bear these patiently, and look to another world for rectification;" "this," observes Mr. Holyoake, "is an ancient and prevalent Christian doctrine, but as false as it is old,

and as pernicious, as it is universal. We differ," Conclusion.
he says, "from this doctrine widely; we indeed acknowledge the disorder and the anarchy, but we say,—the order should be restored here, the confusion should be cleared up in this world, the rectification should take place now. It is not wholesome that it should be left to a future state; it breeds a contentment, which makes suffering merit passive, and insolent tyranny triumphant. What! do you Christians tell us that vice is successful, and virtue does not answer in this world? We say virtue ought to answer, and as far as in our power lies, it shall answer; and we believe it can be made to answer. . . . You tell us, after eighteen centuries of interminable Christian preachment, that we shall often find vice perfectly successful. The more shame for you that it is so. While vice succeeds, society is a blunder, government is anarchy, civilization is criminal contrivance. What is religious discipline for, unless it takes care, and can take care, that vice shall *not* succeed?"

It has been the aim of foregoing chapters, to show that it is solely through Divine intervention in the course of the world, and especially through the great work of the Saviour, that "virtue can be made to answer," even as imperfectly as it does; and that vice has not long since expelled it from

Conclusion. the conflict. But *fas est ab hoste doceri.* These words of atheism may suggest to Christians, whether, through their exertions for virtue and for God, goodness might not become more prevalent and predominant in the world.

Revealed religion teaches patience under suffering; but it is misunderstood, when it is supposed to inculcate quiet submission to wrong. It requires men to war against vice in themselves first, but also in society. It is opposed to confusion, and tends to harmony and order. To restrict its sphere to individual improvement, is to leave to the deist and the atheist, the higher sphere of general society. Humboldt regards mankind as "one great brotherhood, advancing together towards the attainment of one common object, the free development of their moral faculties[7]." When men begin to combine against vice, and see that to repress immorality by all lawful means, is to propagate that religion which Jesus died to give us; when it shall be a chief aim of society to convince every one of its members, by all possible motives, that it is for his own best interest and happiness to live by the law of love to God and man;—then, and not till then, shall we see any great and permanent improvement in the social condition of the world; then

[7] "Cosmos," Sabine's Transl. vol. ii. p. 200, i. p. 356.

there will begin to be a public conscience against vice; then men will be judged, not by their success, but by their merits. Then villany will not be triumphant, triumphant villany will not be applauded.

Towards such a consummation, there is happily a progress among Christians, in the present day: otherwise it would not be a hopeful feature of the times, that atheism professes to be doing the work of religion. Atheism may gain strength amid the inconsistencies of Christians, and the conflict of churches, and the strife of sects. This form of human selfishness may rear its head upon the ruins of Idolatry and Pharisaism. It abounds in Romish countries, though it hides itself from the strong arm of power. It abounds at home; for religious indifference is atheism in every thing but the name.

But if atheism should prosper in its designs, can it be expected to be faithful to its pretensions. Whatever any of its promoters may intend, such an expectation must argue great ignorance both of history and of human nature. Scripture contains fearful indications of a great antichristian power, which is to be for a time predominant, in the latter days. Atheism has been once in full dominion, and its memorial of blood is the most terrible page of history. There may be a still more awful

Conclusion. struggle in the future. In such a conflict, it will go hard with any church or system, in which truth, honesty, guilelessness, good principle, and virtuous conduct are regarded, as by some in these days, not so much the great ends, which it is the business of life to attain,—the very unity with the Eternal, which Jesus Christ came down to impart to man; as certain incidental graces or ornaments of the Christian character, inessential in themselves, because, when possessed, they cannot merit God's favour; and of which the absence is easily pardoned to those who are falsely denominated "the faithful."

The truths of Revelation cannot be too familiarly known. The Great Work of Christ for man cannot be too clearly, nor too constantly proclaimed. The inestimable Love of God is the perpetual theme of Christianity, and should find a ready response in every heart. But it may be worse than useless to dwell on the Love of God, and to forget its aim in all His dealings with mankind. It may be even ruinous to publish the Work of Christ, and to forget the Purpose of His work. It was no subsidiary design, nor incidental result, but the very purpose and intention of His Mission, to destroy the death of sin and to bring us to the God of Holiness. They who read the

Bible with their eyes open, and in the disposition, not to find confirmations of their own notions, but to be taught of God, may see that deliverance from death is deliverance from the power of sin; and that to be brought to God, is to be brought to that Law of Holiness, which resides eternally in His Nature. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). Conclusion.

The end of all religion is the improvement of human nature in its highest faculties. The effects of depravity are manifest, we have seen, in the whole constitution of man; in his understanding, as well as in his affections; for both enter into his moral nature. It follows therefore that education, and especially moral education, is an essential and primary duty of religion. It is a duty of the fathers to the children. Every generation transmits the effects of its vices to those which follow; and, therefore, since religion is the war of virtue against vice, the virtuous and well-disposed should consider it a religious duty they owe to those who follow them, to use all possible means for the expansion and improvement of their moral and intellectual natures. Religion is therefore in a very

Conclusion. defective condition, when doctrinal differences and sectarian strife are obstacles to general education.

To obviate difficulty upon the relations of natural virtue to Christian holiness, it must be considered that the Eternal Law of God, is the Rule of universal Order of all creation. It is the Law of Harmony of all the creatures with the Creator, and with one another. In looking to that eternal law, the Christian religion aims higher than even those ancient theories of moral perfection, which are said to have been "so sublime, that they could never be more than theories[8]." But it is practical in its influence, as well as sublime in its aims. In leading men to be "faithful in their few things," it prepares them to be "rulers over many things."

Man can have no perfect, nor exactly defined knowledge of the law of universal order; nor any infallible guide, on this, or any subject. He may expect, as placed here in a state of trial, to learn in morals, as on every subject, from various sources, and by various means. His probation in life depends upon the employment of all the faculties of his nature. He needs all the light, both of reason and of revelation, and will still be liable to error.

[8] Mr. Macaulay's Essay on Bacon.

Conclusion.

It must be assumed that human nature, though universally sinful, is not utterly debased, nor sunk to the hopeless condition of devils. If it were so, man could gain no knowledge, whether of morals or of God; and must be incapable of spiritual effort or improvement. He retains the elements of that better nature, in which revelation informs us he was created. His faculties are Divine gifts, and not evil, considered in themselves. Even by nature he is capable of many virtues, and, through Divine Mercy, retains a conscience generally determined in favour of goodness, and a spiritual constitution always strengthened and improved by virtuous habits, always debased by deeds and habits of vice.

It is therefore as inconsistent with common sense, as it is with Scripture, to consider virtue to be evil in itself, when it is the fruit of a good natural disposition. Truth, purity, benevolence, are always good, *considered in themselves*, and cannot be called evil even in an atheist. It is but a confusion of thought, to call them sinful, under any circumstances, and by whomsoever performed.

But though not sinful, they may be imperfect. And it is not a matter of indifference, but of practical consequence whether they be called sinful or imperfect. At least, they cannot be said to be

Conclusion. sinful, except when considered as mixed up with low and unworthy motives. One who always tells the truth, but from no better principle, than because he believes it to be for his interest in the long run, cannot, with so mean a motive, be called virtuous. Though his conduct be right in itself, yet its performance is wrong. But suppose him to tell the truth, because he has naturally a sound conscience and good principles of conduct. Although he is then virtuous, in the common sense of the word, yet his virtue remains imperfect, on the principles of natural as well as revealed religion, unless he fulfil that highest law of human nature which is impressed on the constitution by the finger of God;—the law of love to his Creator. True virtue, even according to natural religion, rests on a feeling of duty to the Author and Preserver of life.

This doctrine of all religion is subject to perpetual question. But it is neither improbable nor unreasonable. The atheist may acknowledge no higher law than that of a good nature; but it is consistent with all the principles of Theism, to regard the moral law of humanity, as impressed on the soul by the Creator, not only for the conservation of the order of creation, but for the unity of all creatures with Himself.

Whether or no there can be unity on earth,

without the unity of all with God, is a question which has been decided by the world's experience. We have seen that even the imperfect moral advancement which has been achieved on earth, has not been without its obligations to the Scriptures, and to the supernatural revelations which they record. But even though, abstractedly considered, the unity of creation were possible, without union with the Creator of all; yet the Divine Law must fall short of its Author's purpose in one who denies His Being, and questions those Eternal Attributes, which are the foundation of the Law of Holiness. It is perfectly reasonable, and consistent with common sense, that a cold, heartless, calculating performance of duties, to please oneself, or to be esteemed by men, or from natural good feeling or good sense; but without reverence or love of God, without a grateful sense of His mercies in creation and in Redemption; cannot present us acceptable in His sight. If it can be conceived possible that a child should always do its parents' will, but only in the cold calculation that it was for its interest so to act, and with a heart incapable of beating with affectionate response to a parent's love; such obedience would be even more repugnant to the feelings than the most stubborn wilfulness. It is not unreasonable, then, that the Author of our being, the Giver of every good gift, the Saviour of

Conclusion.

Conclusion. the soul, must require the heartfelt, loving, faithful obedience of His creatures.

The important point, in the relation of religion to morality, reduces itself to the old question of moralists,—"Why am I obliged to do that which is right?" "Why am I obliged to speak the truth?" The Christian cannot reasonably despise the answers which are given to this question by the atheist. I must so act, because it is useful to myself, or useful to society; or because it is the conduct of good sense or good taste; or, perhaps, because it gratifies the moral feelings, and gives peace and satisfaction to the conscience. Truth and upright conduct, are, without doubt, useful both to the individual and to society. God, the Creator of man, and, through the nature of man, the Organizer of society, Himself true and just in His ways, has so ordered all things, that only right conduct can conduce to happiness. It gives health and harmony to the soul: it tends to the order of society. To do what is right is a proof of good sense, for man is so constituted by the Author of his being, that, except in violence to his nature, he cannot look upon falsehood and wrong as other than low and vulgar. It is, for the same reason, the part of good taste to speak the truth, because man is naturally disposed to be pleased with the

beautiful and harmonious. He finds tranquillity and lasting happiness in a good conscience and a sound nature, because he is the creature of a Holy and Good Creator. Conclusion.

All these motives may be admitted; and all may be employed with advantage in education, each to meet the peculiar character and temperament of the pupil. Every man possesses some virtuous elements in his nature; and, though education cannot do every thing, yet he may generally be engaged on the side of virtue by judicious training in early life. It is one of the faults of education, that as, in other matters, it is directed so much to the loading of the memory, so little to the training of the judgment; so, in religion, but little attention is paid to the direction of the moral judgment, and the systematic training of virtuous tastes and habits.

Let all good motives then be brought into action in education, which may engage on the side of Christian virtue. Let it be inculcated that purity of motive, and honourable conduct, and goodness of heart, are useful to the individual and to society: let it be taught that a sound moral nature is an eternal fountain of the best pleasures of human intelligence and affection: let it be enforced that moral effort may heal the diseases of the soul; and that, through the growth of good habits, man

Conclusion. is raised to that perfection of his being, to which he is destined by his Creator. They who labour in sincerity will then discover, by experience, that their work must be founded upon the Love of God, and that the most inspiring motives are those, which spring from the faith of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The lesser motives of morals are good, as far as they go; and may not be destitute of influence: for God is the Author of all, and every where, in His works, has impressed the vestiges of His Holiness.

But only the Christian motives are sufficient. The experience of the world has fully proved, that man, without God, is nothing, and cannot recover himself from the servitude of evil.

With these Christian motives we conclude.

Why ought I to be just, and upright, and charitable, and disinterested, and temperate? Why am I obliged to speak the truth?

First: because God is Eternal Right and Eternal Truth. Because Holiness belongs to His Nature. His Attributes are in perfect unity. There is no inconsistency of one Attribute with another; no opposition of motives; no contradiction between Wisdom and Goodness, between Holiness and Love.

Holiness is the Eternal and Consistent Law of His Nature, and comes forth to be the law of a perfect creation. As He is One in Himself, so, in creation, He has one great design. There proceeds no agency, no influence from the Almighty but what is always consistent with itself. There can be no such thing in the Divine Procedure, as we see continually in the actions of men,—a pursuit of one object to-day, and the opposite to-morrow; a disposition for this end at one time, and the opposite at another. In all His operation, there is unity of purpose, and consistency of motive and action. Conclusion.

And as all which proceeds from God is in consistency with itself, so it is the effect of sin to introduce opposition and confusion. Sin broke the unity of God's works: it is enmity to God: it introduced disorder and confusion, where all had been harmony, and peace, and love.

As all God's works are self-consistent, so their Almighty Author is Eternal Truth: as sin introduced disorder and confusion, so the author of sin is declared to be the "father of lies." "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth; because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (St. John viii. 44).

Conclusion. Why, then, am I obliged to speak the truth? First: because God is truth, and Satan is the father of lies. Because I owe my being to God, and am bound to prefer His Will, to the will of Satan. Because a universe of harmony, and order, and peace, and love, is better than a universe of discord, and confusion, and strife, and hate; and I, as a creature of God's universe, am bound to do all I can, to lessen the influence, and shorten the pestilent dominion of sin. I am bound to be conformed to truth and holiness; because God is Eternal Truth and Holiness, and He desires me to be restored to His Image.

As a second motive: I am bound to do what is right, and to speak the truth; because Jesus Christ the Son of God, has lived as man, and died for this very purpose, that I may be able to order myself by the Divine Law of Love to God and man. He became man, to restore the harmony of God's works, and to give new life to the soul of man. He died to make me true and just, and so to bring me back to God. I had been separated from God by sin, and could never have returned in my own strength. Sin, which broke the harmony of creation in its commencement, breaks it no less in its continuance, and I cannot dwell with God, till I am made free from sin. I am bound to be truthful and upright, because God must have loved me

exceedingly, when I was dead in sin, to give so great a sacrifice for my salvation. Because such Love deserves my best endeavours to make a grateful return. Conclusion.

Such motives may well be summed up in one: Because when I had become an alien from God through sin, Jesus died to bring me back from sin to God.

For a third motive: I am obliged to speak the truth, and do what is right; because truth and right conduct fulfil my destiny in God, and are the beginning of eternal happiness. Conscience bears witness, in the experience of life, that well-doing tends to the soul's well-being: Scripture testifies that it tends to my everlasting well-being. It is essential to the perfection of my nature. Sin and confusion have overspread the works of God, but He intends me to be happy: for all His works are in harmony, all His creatures in happiness, while they retain the state in which He placed them. Because the consequences of sin must be fearful, if I be not delivered from it; since Jesus, the Son of God, would not have humbled Himself to be my Saviour, unless it had been for some great cause. Because it appears, from reason and scripture, to be the very purpose of life that I may learn to do well, and I have no assurance that I shall possess this power after

Conclusion. death. Sin brought death and sorrow into the world. I am to put away sin, that I may have eternal life in Christ, and may pass from sorrow to blessedness.

I am to be truthful, and upright, and just, and chaste, and charitable, and unselfish, and guileless;—I am to live by the Law of Love to God and man, because, beyond the grave there is a life to come,—a life which will never end, where I shall possess faculties of enjoyment, as I do here; powers and capacities, as now, only far more keen and sensitive; and I shall need, there as here, the thousands of adaptations and adjustments, so essential to the well-being of body, soul, and spirit, which, there as here, I shall be unable to order for myself; which none can order for me, except the Almighty Creator, He Who is Holy and Just and Good.

In fine; I am to be true, and just, and holy, because I am created a moral being; my highest powers are moral powers; God has placed me in the world for a moral purpose; Jesus Christ has died to deliver me from moral ruin, and to raise me to moral perfection of spirit; and God Himself is the Moral Governor, and contains within His Nature the Eternal Moral Law. He is Holy and Just and Good.

I am thus to live in this world of sin and

strife, that I may do all in my power to renew the harmony of heaven upon earth. I may anticipate, what prophets indicate, the fulfilment of the prayer—"Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." But I am thus to live, though discord reign, and vice predominate on earth. This little world of man's is but a speck in the illimitable heavens; whose laws, in their myriads of suns, are unbroken from age to age: the life of man but a moment in eternity: the whole universe of change, but as a passing shadow to the UNCHANGEABLE AND INFINITE ONE. I am thus to live, even in a world of sin, that I may be capable of a sinless perfection, and may live in a perfect moral world, in the kingdom of Jesus Christ our Lord; where the will of God is done eternally, and His Laws evermore unbroken; where all is harmony, and holiness, and happiness, and unity, and peace, and love. CONCLUSION.

Δόξα σοί, ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν· δόξα σοί.

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